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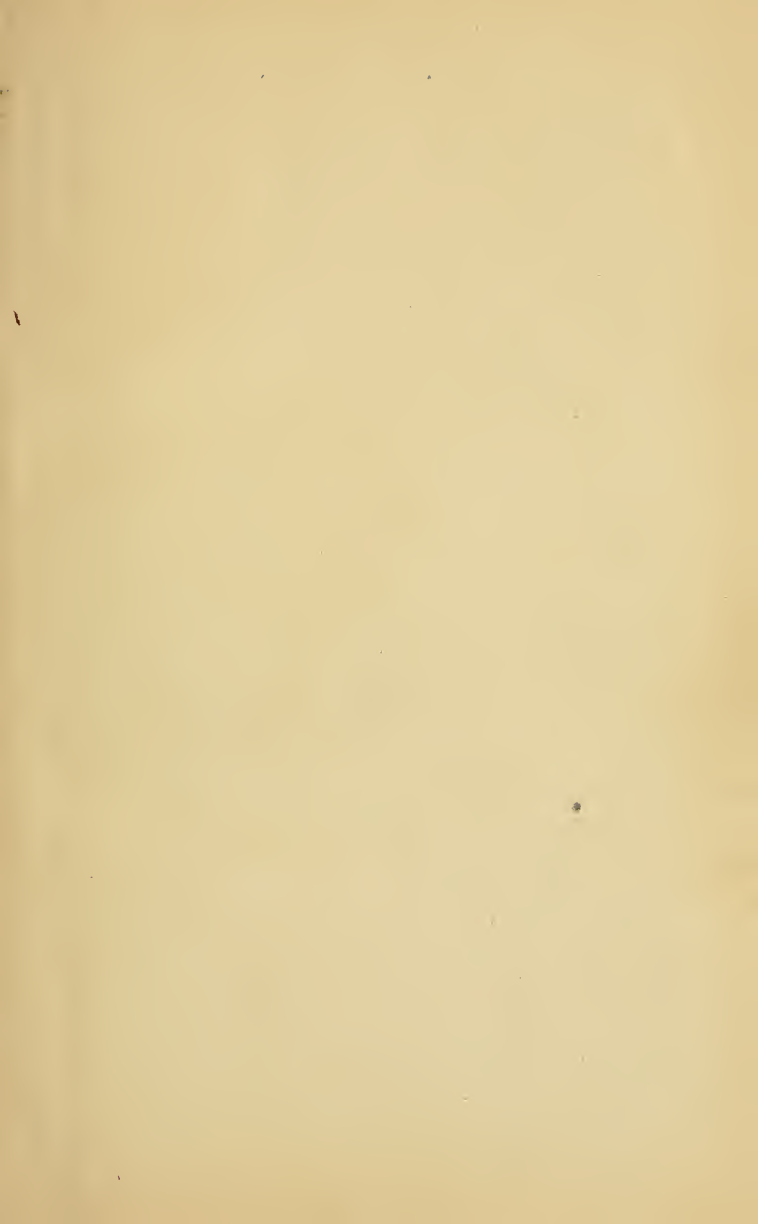


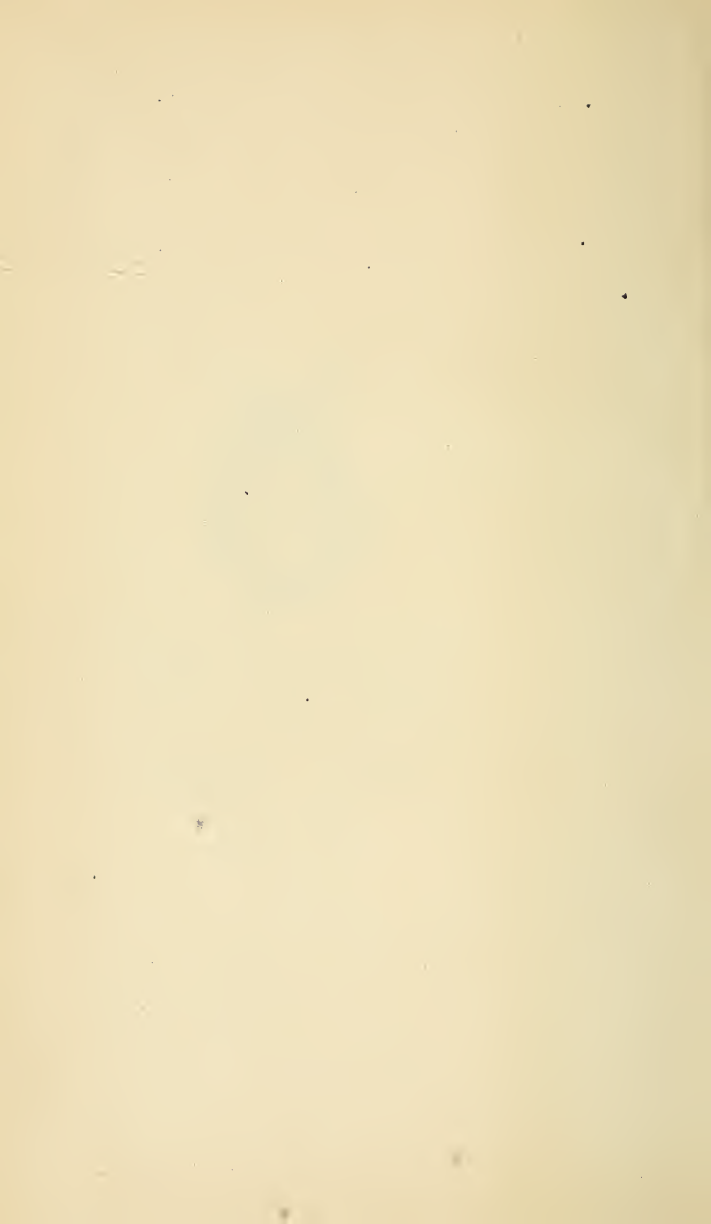
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Denison's Royalty Plays

*Putting It
Over*

by
Larry E. Johnson

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Publishers · Chicago
Price 50 Cents



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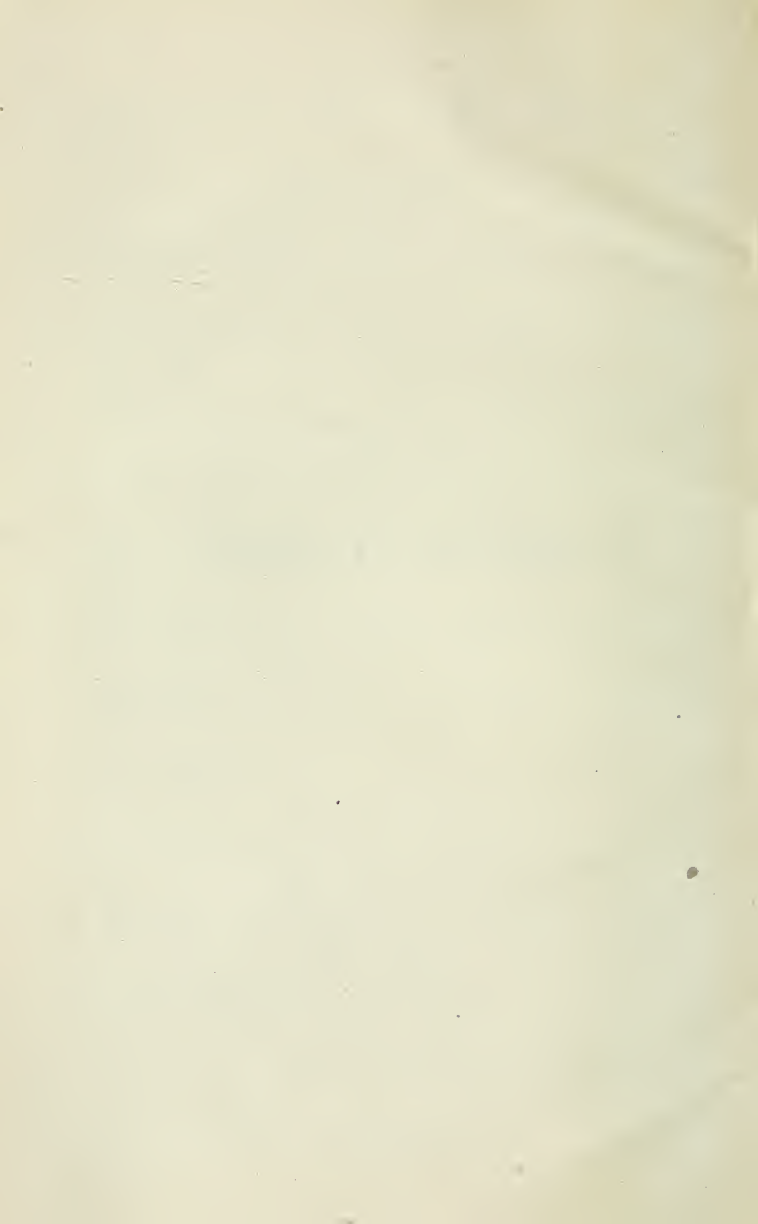
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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers

623 S. Wabash Ave.

CHICAGO

PUTTING IT OVER



PUTTING IT OVER

A Dramatic Comedy
In Three Acts

BY

LARRY E. JOHNSON



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

PS 3519
D264P8
1922

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OCT 21 '22

PUTTING IT OVER

FOR FIVE MEN AND THREE WOMEN.

CHARACTERS.

TOM BROWNE.....	<i>The Chief Engineer</i>
JACK STEWART.....	<i>Who Drew the Plans</i>
COLONEL LANE.....	<i>A Heavy Stockholder</i>
LANNON	<i>A Contractor</i>
BOLTON	<i>Browne's Valet</i>
DAINTRY.....	<i>Foreman at the Dam</i>
EVA LOU.....	<i>The Colonel's Daughter</i>
TORRENCE.....	<i>Lannon's Daughter</i>
MRS. LANE-TURNER.....	<i>Eva Lou's Aunt Jule</i>

PLACE—*Arizona.*

TIME—*The Present.*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. *Browne's apartments in Colonel Lane's residence, nine o'clock in the evening. Going it blind.*

ACT II. *Engineer's general offices at the dam, six weeks later. Keeping it up.*

ACT III. *The same, the following morning. Putting it over.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Two and one-quarter hours.*

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

TOM BROWNE—A young man with a nervous, hysterical temperament. He is a morphine addict. Wears dinner clothes, derby hat, wet rain coat, carries wet umbrella.

JACK STEWART—This is a double role with **BROWNE**, the same actor playing both parts. The make-ups should be identical, but the costumes and mannerisms are entirely different. **STEWART**'s manner is cool and collected, in strong contrast to **BROWNE**'s hysteria. At **STEWART**'s first entrance he wears a shabby genteel suit and hat, with no collar or tie. His face is hidden by a handkerchief which he has improvised as a mask. His clothing is wet. Changes to long bathrobe and bedroom slippers, with bare ankles. Act II, khaki coat and breeches, linen shirt with soft collar, black tie, leggings, soft felt hat. Act III, neat business suit.

COLONEL LANE—Chairman of the board of directors of the Yuba Irrigation Co. Elderly, well-groomed, up-to-date business suit for each act. Changes to pajamas in Act I. White hair, white, close-cropped mustache, eye-glasses. Has a distinguished manner and a crisp, commanding manner of speech. Appears worried and depressed throughout Act I; later he brightens up.

LANNON—Considerably past fifty; has a somewhat pugnacious manner and a strong sense of humor; a grafter, but a good sport. Usual business clothes for each act, not so well groomed as **LANE**. Act I, wet motor coat, cap, goggles.

BOLTON—About forty-five years old. Wears a dark serge suit and black bow tie throughout the

play. His speech and manner are quiet and subdued in the first act; later he becomes self-assertive. Should be able to do the telegraphing required in Act III.

DAINTY—A sub-engineer on BROWNE's staff. An Englishman, rather beefy in appearance, with an aggressive, bullying manner. Wears a checked suit under wet raincoat, and wet derby hat, in Act I. Thereafter he wears khaki.

EVA LOU—(Her name is pronounced with a short "e" as in "never.") About twenty-two years old; pretty and vivacious; should be played preferably by a girl who is somewhat shorter than STEWART. Act I, bright colored evening dress; changes to negligee. Act II, sports outfit or any informal summer dress and hat, long gloves. Act III, handsome but not elaborate sports outfit, such as a light colored silk sweater, white skirt and hat; carries bouquet. She should be able to do the telegraphing required in Act III.

TORRENCE—A young woman in the early twenties; impulsive and fast speaking; full of "pep." Act I, motor coat over evening gown. Act II, flashy traveling suit, bright colored hat, beads and jewelry, long kid gloves. Act III, sports outfit, less subdued than EVA LOU's.

MRS. LANE-TURNER—About the same age as her brother, COLONEL LANE. Rather overbearing in manner and stilted in speech, but this is only superficial, for she has plenty of good common sense. Gray hair; wears eye-glasses. Act I, handsome dinner gown; changes to negligee and boudoir cap. Act II, summer costume. Act III, elaborate summer costume.

THE BURGLAR—This character has no lines to speak, and is introduced so that there will be no stage wait while the actor who is playing **BROWNE** changes to the **STEWART** costume. As this burglar is supposed to be **STEWART**, it is essential that he be of the same height and general build as the actor who plays **BROWNE** and **STEWART**. It is also necessary that he keep his face hidden by the handkerchief while on the stage. He wears a suit, hat and mask identical in appearance with those worn by **STEWART** later. Use electric flash lamp.

PERSONAL PROPERTIES.

BROWNE and **STEWART**—Suits, shirts and collars to pack. Flash lamp, safety razor. Bucket of sand and small trowel.

LANE—Watch.

LANNON—Paper for signature. Check.

BOLTON—Tray with napkins and silver, soup tureen, ladle, teapot, other foods and dishes. Old clothes, hat and shoes. Expense statement.

DAINTRY—Lighted cigar. Papers.

EVA LOU—Hatpin. Bouquet of roses.

TORRENCE—Gloves.

OFF STAGE EFFECTS—Electric house bell. Auto horn. Telephone bell. Rain. Crash. Factory bell. Phonograph with military band record.

For stage props, see description of settings.

NOTES ON STAGING.

The descriptions of stage settings, costumes and stage business of the characters as here set forth are in accordance with the professional production of "Putting It Over." Where scenic facilities are lim-

ited, the details of the settings may be altered as required.

It should be borne in mind that the room where Act I occurs has no windows, and is supposed to have a skylight only for daylight illumination. The actual showing of the skylight in the ceiling is not essential, but there must be no windows, otherwise STEWART would be able to escape.

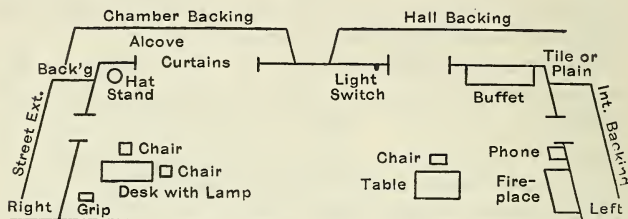
A rainstorm effect for use in Act I, whenever the outside door (right) is open, is desirable, but not absolutely necessary. The average theatre has the necessary apparatus. All persons entering from this door should have wet overcoats and hats or umbrellas, to indicate that they have come in out of the storm.

The factory gong in Act I should be located as far away from the wings as possible, or muffled in some way, to give the effect of distance. A deep-toned whistle may be used instead, if more convenient.

The telegraph code is so widely known that it is unwise to "fake" the sending in Act III. BOLTON and EVA LOU should learn from some telegraph operator the business required. As neither is supposed to be an expert, the sending can be amateurish, so no great amount of practice is demanded; but the sending should be intelligible.

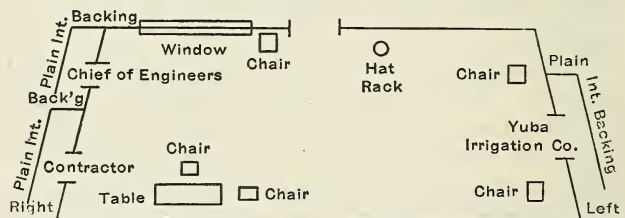
SCENE PLOT.

ACT I.



ACTS II AND III.

Mountain Landscape Drop.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

PUTTING IT OVER

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *Tom Browne's apartments in Colonel Lane's residence. The room is done in handsomely finished woodwork and paneling. There is a door left of center which leads into the hall. A curtained archway in the rear wall at the right, opens to a sleeping alcove, and when the curtains are parted a glimpse of bedroom furniture is afforded. A door up left leads into the bathroom, and a door in the center of the right wall affords direct entrance to the room from the street. As there is a skylight only for daylight illumination, there are no windows.*

Against the rear wall, between the hall door and the bathroom door, is a buffet with cups, decanter and glasses. An umbrella urn and a hall tree are in the upper right corner. There is a fireplace, with mantel over it, in the left wall, down from the bathroom door. A small table, with a light chair back of it, is down left, not far from the fireplace. Down right is a large flat-top mahogany desk, with a swivel chair back of it and a heavy leather-padded chair at the left of the desk.

On the rear wall is a large framed blue-print, supposed to represent the construction of a large dam. On the mantel, among the other decorations, is a framed photograph of Browne. An electric push button is located over the mantel. On the left wall, between bathroom door and mantel, is a telephone. A small grip or travelling bag is on the floor at the right of the desk. On the desk are a typewriter, two

books and a framed photograph, beside the usual desk fittings and writing material. Cigarette box on mantel. Table spread in buffet drawer. Umbrella in urn.

The room is lighted either by a chandelier or by wall fixtures, operated by an electric switch beside the hall door in the rear wall. On the desk is a strong reading lamp with a red globe, on an independent circuit so that it remains burning when the other lights are extinguished. There is a red glow in the fireplace. If a clock is visible, it should point to the hour of nine. A rain-effect should be located off stage at the right to be operated each time the right door is opened. Crash box off stage near sleeping alcove. Distant factory gong off stage; auto horn off right.

When the curtain rises, the room is illuminated only by the desk lamp and the glow of the fireplace. An electric bell rings off stage, at the back, and BOLTON enters from the hall. He crosses to the right, opens the outside door and admits LANNON. LANNON wears, over an everyday business suit, a motor coat and cap, with goggles attached to the cap.

BOLTON.

Mr. Lannon, come right in, sir.

LANNON.

Is Mr. Browne at home, Bolton?

BOLTON.

No, sir.

LANNON.

I hardly thought that he would be. This is the last place anyone would expect to find him at night.

BOLTON.

Let me take your coat, sir.

LANNON.

(*Easily.*)

Never mind. Car is outside. If you don't object, though, I'll sit here (*indicating the desk*) a few minutes. Devilish nasty weather, Bolton.

BOLTON.

Yes, sir.

LANNON.

My girl, Torrence, is in the front part of the house paying Miss Lane a farewell visit, so I thought I'd come in here and wait. (*Sits at the left of the desk.*)

BOLTON.

Is Miss Lannon going away?

LANNON.

Yes, she's going away for my health; Paris; a couple of months. Says she needs a short change, and I don't know of any place she can get short-changed quicker than in Paris. (*Looks at BOLTON.*)

BOLTON.

Yes, sir.

LANNON.

I don't suppose you ever smiled in your life, did you, Bolton?

BOLTON.

(*Gravely.*)

As a boy, sir, I was said to have a very sunny disposition. (*Crosses to mantel.*)

LANNON.

You certainly outgrew it, Bolton.

BOLTON.

Yes, sir. (*Takes cigarette box from mantel.*)

LANNON.

Woman is a mighty funny proposition, Bolton.

BOLTON.

So I have been told, sir. (*Offers cigarettes.*)

LANNON.

Do I look like a man who would have a cigarette?

BOLTON.

No, sir; can't say as you do, sir. Whiskey, sir?
(*Waves his hand toward sideboard.*)

LANNON.

No, I never had that particular vice. When I was young I was too poor, so I waited until I could afford it. And when I made my pile I discovered that a man was never rich enough to afford whiskey.

(*The sound of a latch key is heard in the outside door. BOLTON quickly crosses to right. As he does so—*)

The door is opened by BROWNE. He wears a raincoat over his dinner jacket, and he carries an umbrella.

BROWNE.

Whose machine is that?

LANNON.

(*Turning his head, but not rising.*)

Hello, Browne.

BROWNE.

(*Suddenly.*)

'Lo, Lannon.

(*BOLTON takes his hat and umbrella, puts the former on the rack and the latter in the urn, then helps BROWNE remove his raincoat. BROWNE's face shows that his nerves are at high tension. He never removes his eyes from LANNON. When his coat is off he crosses left quickly until he is left of the center door. He stands looking at LANNON, evidently wait-*

ing for BOLTON to leave the room before he speaks. BOLTON, after taking the raincoat and hanging it up, starts to roll the umbrella.)

BROWNE.

(Suddenly observing BOLTON.)

Never mind that, Bolton. Good Lord! You fuss around like an old hen. Are you trying to drive me crazy? Get out!

(BOLTON places the umbrella in the urn, bows, and exits center door. BROWNE follows BOLTON with his eyes until the door is closed. Then he comes swiftly down to LANNON.)

BROWNE.

(Tensely.)

I'm on to you.

LANNON.

(Looking up.)

What's that?

BROWNE.

I'm on to you and your graft.

LANNON.

What particular graft do you mean?

BROWNE.

The cement.

LANNON.

(Calmly.)

Ah!

BROWNE.

I've got you dead to rights. Our contracts specify three X finest grade Portland cement, and you've been shipping some rotten mixture—mostly sand. It isn't even a high grade of sand. It has about as much strength as buttermilk.

LANNON.

You've been using it. I've got your O. K. for every carload I've shipped.

BROWNE.

I didn't know. Daintry examined the consignments and brought me the slips to O. K. But don't think you are going to get away with it! Can you realize what it means? The dam is just two sixty-foot walls, filled in between with rotten cement—practically mud. When they open the sluice gates and that head of water strikes, it will melt away like so much sugar, and two years of work and a million-dollar investment will be swept into Yuba Valley!

LANNON.

Well, what are you going to do about it?

BROWNE.

(Sarcastically.)

Oh, I'm going to keep quiet and let you go ahead with your graft, and when the crash comes I'll be the goat—not!

LANNON.

Why would you be the goat?

BROWNE.

Because I'm the chief engineer of the Yuba Irrigation Co.; because I drew the plans for the dam, made the survey, and supervised the construction.

LANNON.

(Insinuatingly.)

Oh, did you?

BROWNE.

(Suspiciously.)

What do you mean, "did I"?

LANNON.

Nothing.

BROWNE.

Just as I was making a reputation as an engineer, a couple of crooks put a crimp—

LANNON.

Cut out the rough stuff.

BROWNE.

(*Sulkily.*)

Well?

LANNON.

What are you going to do about it?

BROWNE.

(*Excitedly.*)

I'm going to ring that bell, call Colonel Lane—he's just up-stairs—and expose you and Daintry. I've got a hunch he's in it, too. I'm going to show Lane what kind of a run he and the other stockholders are getting for their money! (*Goes left to bell.*)

LANNON.

(*Emphatically.*)

Don't ring that bell. (BROWNE *hesitates.*) You had better not ring that bell. (*Rising.*)

BROWNE.

(*Turning.*)

Why hadn't I better ring that bell?

LANNON.

Sit down and I'll tell you. (*Sits at right of table.* BROWNE *hesitates and then sits at left of table.*) Browne, it's about time that you found out just where you stand. I've been intending to set you right for some little while, but as it didn't make much difference one way or the other I let it pass. You forced

my hand. A moment ago you said you made the drawings for this dam. Now, how about that?

BROWNE.
(*Half rising.*)

What do you mean?

LANNON.
I mean just what you think I mean. I mean you stole those plans.

BROWNE.
(*Angered.*)

You—What are you saying? (*Stands.*)

LANNON.
Sit down. (BROWNE *sits.*) Don't make me waste time proving what you know is true. I can give you day and date when you took the blue prints out of the other fellow's carton, and slipped them into your own as they lay on the committee table.

BROWNE.
(*Frightened.*)

You won't tell anyone, Lannon? You're a good fellow, Lannon. You won't say anything about it?

LANNON.
Why, of course not. Why should I?

BROWNE.
I had to make good. My folks—My mother—They all thought I was such a corking good engineer—and I knew my own drawings were rotten.

LANNON.
(*Drily.*)

They were. I've got one of them now, and you can't tell whether it's the front elevation of a dam or a cross-section of a dog-house.

BROWNE.

I know. I know they were bad. I was up against it. And that day I couldn't resist the temptation. I meant to give the other fellow all the money I got out of it. All I wanted to do was to make good.

LANNON.

But you never did give him any money, did you?

BROWNE.

(*Weakly.*)

Not yet—but I will.

LANNON.

That was two years ago. I bet you never wrote him. You don't remember the name on the tag? (*After a pause.*) I thought so. Well, I do. It was J. J. Stewart, and he was a graduate of Michigan Polytechnic.

BROWNE.

He never knew about—

LANNON.

No. He'll never bother you, either. He was down and out—in the hospital—the last I heard of him.

BROWNE.

I'm not well, myself. I'm a sick man.

LANNON.

No, you're not sick. It's the effects of the dope wearing off.

BROWNE.

Dope?

LANNON.

Morphine.

BROWNE.

(*Hotly.*)

If you say I take morphine, you're a liar.

LANNON.

What? (*Grabs BROWNE's right wrist, forces it on the table and shoves back his cuff.*) Are those marks the scars of a hypodermic needle, or is it a sporadic case of measles?

BROWNE.

(*Faltering.*)

I have to take morphine sometimes—doctor's orders—weak heart.

LANNON.

(*Rising and buttoning his coat.*)

Oh, well, let it go at that. (*Goes up to BROWNE.*) You see, young man, when you call me hard names it's in line with the historic occasion when the pot made derogatory remarks about the kettle.

(*There is a knock at the center door.*)

BROWNE.

(*Going up center.*)

It's Lane. I can't see him now, I'm all shot to pieces.

(*The knock is repeated. LANNON takes BROWNE by the shoulder and shoves him into the bedroom up right, then opens the center door.*)

LANE enters, center, from the hall.

LANE.

Ah, Lannon.

LANNON.

How do you do, colonel. Just back from New York?

LANE.

Yes, I want to see Browne.

LANNON.

Mr. Browne is not—

LANE.

(Interrupting in surprise.)

But Bolton said—

LANNON.

—Presentable. He's taking a bath. *(Points to the bathroom.)*

LANE.

I particularly want to see him. I'll come in again.

LANNON.

I'm waiting here till Torrence—

LANE.

(Interrupting.)

Oh, she's upstairs chatting with Eva Lou, I believe.

LANNON.

How is the Irrigation Company coming along, colonel?

LANE.

Very bad; very bad. If we don't make some kind of a showing here pretty soon there will be no Irrigation Company. We have already spent \$100,000 above the original estimate on the operations here, and the dam doesn't appear to be any nearer completion than it was six months ago.

LANNON.

If it's money, colonel—

LANE.

(Interrupting.)

No, no, Lannon. I'm deeply in your debt now. Besides, the more money we spend, the more the work seems to be retarded. Our only hope is that Browne will wake up and start things moving.

LANNON.

I'm sorry, colonel.

LANE.

I'm sorry, too. It spells ruin for me if this thing falls through. Tell Browne I must see him to-night. Good night, Lannon. (*He goes out into the hall, closing the center door behind him.*)

LANNON.

Good night, colonel. (*Stands looking after LANE.*)

BROWNE comes from bedroom and looks at LANNON.

BROWNE.

You don't like the colonel very well, do you?

LANNON.

No, I don't, Browne.

BROWNE.

Is that the reason you're putting a crimp in the irrigation scheme?

LANNON.

One reason. I have another.

BROWNE.

Miss Lane.

LANNON.

We won't discuss Miss Lane. But since you have broached that subject, you will have to excuse me for touching on a little flirtation between you and my daughter. (*BROWNE crosses to left.*) As long as it simply amused Torry I didn't mind, but now that you two are talking matrimony I'm going to call a halt. The man she marries is not going to be a crook.

BROWNE.

(*Sarcastically.*)

That sounds good, coming from you.

LANNON.

No matter how it sounds, it goes; see? (LANNON looks steadily at BROWNE, who tries to look at him in return but finally drops his eyes.)

BROWNE.

(Sullenly.)

I guess we have something to say about that, if—

LANNON.

(Intensely.)

I said it has got to stop. (Walks up to BROWNE.)

BROWNE.

(Surlily.)

All right. (LANNON crosses to hall door.) You better be careful about that cement. Don't work it too raw. Someone else will find out about it.

LANNON.

Don't worry, bud. If you hadn't discovered it to-day you never would have known. Every car coming in now is strictly up to specifications. (Goes out hall door.)

(BROWNE goes to drawer at desk and looks inside.)

BOLTON opens center door.

BOLTON.

Will you have supper served in your room, sir?

BROWNE.

Yes. (As BOLTON is about to go out at center.) Bolton.

BOLTON.

Yes, sir.

BROWNE.

Did you take a hypo needle and a vial of morphine out of this drawer?

BOLTON.
(*Stammering.*)

I—I—

BROWNE.
What did you do with it?

BOLTON.
I hid it, sir.

BROWNE.
Why? (*Crosses to BOLTON.*)

BOLTON.
I thought perhaps—you might forget about it, sir—if it wasn't always near you.

BROWNE.
(*Sneering.*)
Thought I might quit using it, to please you?

BOLTON.
No, sir. I thought—

BROWNE.
Get it.

BOLTON.
Yes, sir. But won't you please try and give up the habit? It's killing you.

BROWNE.
Get it.

BOLTON.
Yes, sir. But if you only—

BROWNE.
(*Strikes BOLTON, who falls near the center door.*)
Now will you do what I tell you?

(*BROWNE crosses to right. There is a knock at the hall door. BOLTON rises quickly and opens the door.*)

TORRENCE enters.

BOLTON.

Miss Lannon, sir.

TORRENCE.

Where is my father, Bolton?

BOLTON.

He is waiting in the car, miss. (*He goes out through the hall, closing the door.*)

TORRENCE.

(*Quickly.*)

We've just about three minutes to talk, so you'd better let me do all the talking. First of all, we're going to elope.

BROWNE.

Elope?

TORRENCE.

Yes. Dad is sending me away to Paris for a couple of months. He thinks I'll forget all about you in that time. Maybe I will, so if you want to marry me, now's your chance.

BROWNE.

What about my job?

TORRENCE.

You can get another job as good as this, but you'll never get another wife as good as I'd be.

BROWNE.

But—

TORRENCE.

Hush. You can take the ten o'clock accommodation to-night. I leave on the express in the morning.

BROWNE.

Oh. We elope in sections?

TORRENCE.

Yes.

BROWNE.

That train leaves in twenty minutes. (*Looks at his watch.*) I can never make it.

TORRENCE.

Not if you stand there talking. Where's your grip? I'll help you pack.

BROWNE.

(*Points to right.*)

There it is.

TORRENCE.

(*Getting grip.*)

Now, get a few things together—all your valuables—and I'll do the packing. (BROWNE goes into the bedroom. TORRENCE unstraps the grip and puts it on the desk. An auto horn is heard off right.) Hurry! Hurry! Father's getting impatient. (BROWNE enters with suits, shirts, collars, etc.) Give me those things. (*Starts to pack.*) Now, listen. Go as far as Kansas City. Stay at the Maverick Hotel, and at ten in the morning be there with a minister and a marriage license. I'll do the rest.

BROWNE.

Your father? He's pretty foxy.

TORRENCE.

Yes, I know. He started out in life with nothing at all. Now he's got oodles of money and a lovely daughter. He had to be foxy. But he's not the only clever one in the family. Now, get your rings and chain and all your nice toilet articles. (BROWNE goes into the bedroom.) You've forgotten your pajamas. (*The auto horn is sounded again.*) Oh, gee! There's pa again. Hurry!

BROWNE enters from the bedroom.

BROWNE.

Say, Torrence, I'm in a bunch of trouble here.

TORRENCE.

Hush, boy. You don't know what trouble means. Wait until we're married. Wait until we're married! (*Having put BROWNE's things in the grip, she closes it.*) There you are. (*Hands it to him.*) Now, don't miss the train. Kiss me. (*They kiss. The auto horn is heard again.*) Say, I'll bet he's mad. (*Crosses to hall door at center.*) If he's awful mad I'll blow the horn to let you know. If he's swearing I'll blow it twice. Good night. (*Opens the hall door, goes out and closes it.*)

(*BROWNE turns the electric switch at the door, extinguishing all the lights except the desk lamp. He sits at the desk and writes. After a moment the outside door at the right opens cautiously, and—*)

A BURGLAR appears. He is dressed roughly, and has a red handkerchief tied across the lower part of his face. His hat is pulled down over his eyes, and he carries an electric flash lamp. This is supposed to be STEWART, so the face must be well concealed. BROWNE does not detect his presence. The auto horn toots several times. BROWNE makes a slight movement at the desk. The BURGLAR jumps behind the bedroom curtain. BROWNE gets up, puts on his coat and hat, takes his grip and goes outside, through the right door. (*This performer now changes costume for his next appearance as STEWART.*) The BURGLAR comes out of the alcove, and then hastens into the bathroom as—

The center door opens and AUNT JULE and BOLTON enter from the hall. AUNT JULE is dressed in a dinner gown, and wears eye-glasses.

AUNT JULE.

There is a burglar in this house, and nothing you can say will convince me to the contrary.

BOLTON.

But Mrs. Lane-Turner, Mr. Browne and I have been in this room almost continuously for the past two hours.

AUNT JULE.

Where is Mr. Browne now?

BOLTON.

He has probably gone out for a breath of air. I see his hat and raincoat are not on the rack.

AUNT JULE.

He must like his air damp. It's pouring rain.

BOLTON.

You see, madam, there is no burglar here.

AUNT JULE.

I insist on your searching everywhere. Look in that room. (*Points to the bedroom.*)

BOLTON.

(*Goes to bedroom door.*)

If you insist.

AUNT JULE.

Wait. Do you know the correct procedure upon seeing a burglar?

BOLTON.

No, madam.

AUNT JULE.

You look him calmly but firmly in the eye. It will subdue him at once—mind over matter.

BOLTON.

But if he should have a pistol?

AUNT JULE.

Continue to look him firmly in the eye.

BOLTON.

But if he should shoot me?

AUNT JULE.

I will notify the police at once.

BOLTON.

But, madam—don't you think it would be well to notify them first?

AUNT JULE.

Not at all. I feel quite capable of managing this myself. Now, go in. (*BOLTON goes into the bedroom, where there is a crash. AUNT JULE backs away left.*) Look him in the eye, Bolton. Look him in the eye.

BOLTON enters from bedroom.

BOLTON.

No one here, madam.

AUNT JULE.

What was that noise?

BOLTON.

I fell over a chair. Are you convinced, madam?

AUNT JULE.

We will search the rest of the house. (*Points to the right.*) Is that door locked?

BOLTON.

No, madam.

AUNT JULE.

Then lock it. (*BOLTON locks the outside door.*) Now lock that door, too. (*Points to bathroom.*)

BOLTON.

That won't be necessary. (*Crosses left, and then turns.*)

AUNT JULE.

Why not?

BOLTON.

In the first place, there's no window in the bathroom. In the second place, there's nothing to steal in there. In the third place, there's no lock on the door in the first place.

AUNT JULE.

Follow me. (*Exits into the hall. BOLTON turns off the lights and follows her, closing the door after them.*)

STEWART *enters from the bathroom, using the flash lamp. As he is supposed to be the burglar who entered the bathroom, he must walk and flash the lamp in the same manner. He has a safety razor in his left hand. He goes to the hall door and tries the handle.*

STEWART.

Locked. (*Looks for switch, finds it and turns on the lights. Comes down center, takes off his hat and removes the handkerchief from his face. Goes to the desk and opens a drawer.*) If there's anything to steal in this joint, I've overlooked it. The biggest haul up to date is a safety razor. (*Sees the note that BROWNE wrote lying on the desk, and picks it up.*) It's addressed to Bolton. (*Reads.*) "Things are looking kind of bad for me." Same here, old sport. (*Reads.*) "So I have left the country." That's about all he did leave. (*Looks at note.*) Didn't sign his name. I guess he's ashamed of it. I hate to go out in the rain again, but if I stay here I'll get pinched, sure. (*Goes to outside door at*

right.) Locked. (*Hurries to bedroom and looks in.*) No windows. How do they light this place? (*Looks up.*) Skylight. Well, I'm here to stay. My first burglar job will be my last. (*Sits in big chair at left of desk.*) I'm as big a failure at this as I am at everything else. (*Dejectedly.*) I wonder how long they'll give me. Ten years, I suppose—ten years for stealing a razor. And I can't even cut my throat; it's a safety. (*Sighs; looks at razor.*) By George, if I have to go to jail, I'll go looking decent. (*Rises.*) I'll take a shave and a hot bath while I'm waiting for the patrol wagon. (*Crosses to bathroom door.*) I'll take a shave to-night. They'll probably give me a haircut in the morning. (*Goes into bathroom, closing the door.*)

BOLTON *enters from the hall with a tray containing supper, which he places on the sideboard. He listens at the bathroom door. Then he takes a cloth from the sideboard drawer, spreads it on the table down left, and returns to the sideboard.*

LANE *enters from the hall through the center door, which BOLTON has left open.*

LANE.

Where is Mr. Browne, Bolton?

BOLTON.

Taking a bath, sir.

LANE.

(*Testily.*)

What? Again? Is he taking baths on a bet? Every time I come here he's in the tub. Must be precious particular about his personal cleanliness. Too bad he isn't as careful about his morals. Well, I can't wait all night for him. (*Goes to hall door.*)

If you catch him between baths, tell him I'm back from New York. And tell him the directors will give him ten weeks—no more—to finish up the work on the dam. Don't forget; ten weeks. (*Goes into the hall, slamming the door behind him.*)

(*BOLTON arranges the dishes, goes to the sideboard, pours some liquor into a glass, places the glass on the tray, knocks gently on the bathroom door and, after a pause, knocks loudly.*)

STEWART.

(*In the bathroom.*)

All right; don't shoot. I'll come out.

STEWART opens the bathroom door and BOLTON presents the tray to him. STEWART has on a bright-colored bathrobe that reaches nearly to his ankles, and bedroom slippers, but his ankles are bare. He looks in surprise at BOLTON, then at the tray, then again at BOLTON. Finally he takes the glass, drinks the contents and replaces the glass on the tray.

BOLTON.

(*Replacing the tray on the sideboard.*)

Supper is served, sir.

STEWART.

(*Dumbfounded.*)

Huh?

(*STEWART looks at the table, then at BOLTON, then goes slowly down to the table, occasionally looking over his shoulder at BOLTON, who follows him and places the chair back of the table. STEWART sits facing the audience. BOLTON unfolds a napkin, which STEWART places upon his knee. BOLTON ladles soup from the tureen into the plate.*)

BOLTON.

Noodle soup, sir.

STEWART.

(*Not addressing BOLTON.*)

This is only a dream, and I'll wake up before I taste that soup. (*Takes spoonful of soup, and smiles.*) No; it's no dream. (*Eats soup, and then looks over his shoulder for BOLTON.*) You make me nervous, standing there. Come around where I can see you. (*BOLTON comes down left.*) Say, who are you, anyway?

BOLTON.

(*Gasps.*)

Why, I—I am Bolton, sir.

STEWART.

Ah, yes; Bolton.

BOLTON.

Pardon me, sir, but do you need—need the needle?

STEWART.

What's that you say?

BOLTON.

I say, do you need the needle?

STEWART.

You mean, do I need the noodle. (*Indicating the soup.*)

BOLTON.

No, sir. Begging your pardon, sir, I mean do you need the needle?

STEWART.

(*Looking at him suspiciously.*)

No, Bolton, I do not need the needle. I may feed de feedle, or I may even deed de deedle, but I do not need the needle.

BOLTON.

I am glad of that, sir.

STEWART.

I'm very glad you're glad. Now, after this short but pleasing conversation, we will return to our soup. (*Eats.*)

BOLTON.

Yes, sir. (*Goes back behind the chair.*)

STEWART.

(*Ruminating, looks right, leaning back in chair.*)

I wonder what this fellow's game is. (BOLTON removes soup plate and tureen to sideboard. STEWART does not notice this.) He has probably telephoned the police and is waiting their arrival. He knows I wouldn't run away without my trousers. (*Sighs.*) Well, I might as well finish the soup. (*Is about to eat, and sees the plate is gone. Takes up the teapot and looks around for a cup.*)

BOLTON.

(*Bringing a cup from the sideboard.*)

Here's a cup, sir.

STEWART.

(*Half rising, startled.*)

What's that?

BOLTON.

A cup, sir.

STEWART.

(*Sinking back in chair.*)

Heavens! I thought you said "cop."

BOLTON.

(*Pouring tea.*)

Beg pardon; Colonel Lane was here while you were taking a bath.

STEWART.

He was?

BOLTON.

Yes, sir. He told me to tell you that he had just returned from New York. He had seen the directors, sir, and he was very sorry to say that they would give you only ten weeks to finish the dam contract.

STEWART.

Tell him not to worry. They'll give me ten years for starting this dam contract. (*Starts to eat. Suddenly he sees the picture of BROWNE on the wall.*) Look!

BOLTON.

Sir?

STEWART.

That photograph, Bolton! (*Goes to the picture.*)

BOLTON.

What of it, sir?

STEWART.

Who is that man?

BOLTON.

Why, that is you, sir.

STEWART.

(*Takes down the picture and examines it closely.*)

I could almost believe it.

BOLTON.

It is said to be a remarkable likeness, sir.

STEWART.

It is a remarkable likeness—a most remarkable likeness. (*Aside.*) That's the answer. Bolton mistakes me for that man. (*Taps photo. To BOLTON, tapping the photo.*) Let me see; when was this taken?

BOLTON.

Two years ago, sir; right after your drawings were accepted.

STEWART.

Do you think I have changed much? Take a good look at me.

BOLTON.

(*Looks at STEWART and then at the photo.*)

Very little, sir. It is a good photograph.

STEWART.

Well, I'll be hanged! (*Sinks in the chair by the desk.*)

BOLTON.

Hadn't you better lie down, sir? You are not well. You don't look like yourself, sir.

STEWART.

Maybe not; but I look almighty like somebody else.

BOLTON.

If you could only stop the morphine, sir.

STEWART.

Morphine?

BOLTON.

(*Anxiously.*)

Yes, sir. It is spoiling your career, and it will eventually kill you. (*STEWART is about to speak.*) Under the influence of the drug, you become listless. You lose your energy. All your important work is left to your executives—and they are a pack of wastrels, especially Daintry. If you will not think of yourself, consider Col. Lane. That poor gentleman's last dollar is in this irrigation project. Try to give up the habit. It only needs a little will power. Try. If you succeed, you will feel like another man.

STEWART.

I don't want to feel like another man, Bolton. It's bad enough to look like one. (BOLTON *sighs and goes up stage*. STEWART *looks up and sees BOLTON as he is about to go out into the hall.*) Bolton!

BOLTON.
(*Turning.*)

Sir?

STEWART.

As you remarked a little while ago, I'm not feeling well, and I think I will take a little walk. You haven't any objections, have you, Bolton?

BOLTON.

I, sir? Certainly not. I will lay out your clothes.

STEWART.
That's a good idea. Do.

BOLTON.
(*Going to the bedroom alcove.*)

Would you prefer the norfolk or the striped suit?

STEWART.

The norfolk, by all means. (BOLTON *bows and exits into the bedroom.*) In a few days I may be wearing striped clothes exclusively. But it will not be from preference.

STEWART *sits at the left of the desk. He picks up the photo and looks at it. After a short pause BOLTON enters quickly from the bedroom.*

BOLTON.
(*Excitedly.*)

Your clothes, sir!

STEWART.

Well?

BOLTON.

They're gone.

STEWART.

Gone?

BOLTON.

Your jewelry and toilet articles are stolen.

STEWART.

Stolen?

BOLTON.

There has been a burglar here.

STEWART.

There has. He's here yet.

BOLTON.

Sir?

STEWART.

You must be mistaken.

BOLTON.

Beg pardon, sir; no sir. Look for yourself.

(BOLTON *raises curtain* and STEWART *goes quickly into bedroom.*)

STEWART.

By George, your right. Have you searched the house?

BOLTON.

Not everywhere, sir. There's the bathroom.

STEWART.

Ah, yes. Let us examine the bathroom.

BOLTON.

(*Going left.*)

That is hardly necessary, sir. What could a burglar take in the bathroom?

STEWART.

A bath.

BOLTON.

You are in a humorous mood to-night, sir. (*Goes into the bathroom.*)

STEWART.

(*Aside.*)

Yes, but I won't feel so funny when he finds those clothes. (*Goes down right. BOLTON appears at the bathroom door, carrying a handful of clothes, hat and shoes. STEWART turns.*) What have you there, Bolton?

BOLTON.

It's clothes, sir; more properly, rags.

STEWART.

I noticed them lying on a chair when I was taking my bath.

BOLTON.

The impudence of the fellow, sir! He has actually put on one of your suits and escaped, leaving these rags.

STEWART.

The scoundrel! (*BOLTON searches pockets.*) What are you doing? (*Sharply.*)

BOLTON.

There may be something in the pockets, sir.

STEWART.

(*Sadly.*)

No, no, Bolton. If that young man had anything in the pockets he wouldn't have been a burglar.

BOLTON.

(*Examining hat.*)

No matter how careful they are, they always overlook something. See, here's his name in his hat, sir. (*Eagerly.*) "J. J. Stewart, Ann Arbor, Mich." We've got him, sir. I'll give these to the police, and

my fine gentleman will spend the next few years behind the bars.

STEWART.

I suppose he will. But don't let us feel so joyous about it.

BOLTON.

I'll attend to it at once. (*Quickly unlocks the right door and goes outside.*)

STEWART.

Wait! (*The door closes.*) There go my pants. (*Crosses to left of stage.*)

LANNON *softly opens the hall door, enters, closes it, walks quickly and quietly up to STEWART and taps him on the shoulder. Stewart starts.*

STEWART.

Don't ever gumshoe up behind a man and tap him on the shoulder like that. He might have heart disease.

LANNON.

(*Hurriedly.*)

I've been turning this matter over in my mind, and I think you'd better get away from here.

STEWART.

Yes, I've been thinking that, too. (*Moves chair from behind table to right of table and sits, facing LANNON.*)

LANNON.

When the crash comes, I'm afraid you'll squeal. You never had much nerve, and there'll be courts of inquiry, sheriffs, cops, and even a short term in jail. And—

STEWART.

Good heavens! Can't you fellows talk about anything else but sheriffs and cops and jails? Gad! You must have an unhealthy mind.

LANNON.

Well, I hope you don't expect me to help you out if you get in bad?

STEWART.

No. After taking a good look at you, I don't.

LANNON.

Have you any money?

STEWART.

Now, what's the use of starting another foolish conversation?

LANNON.

I thought so. Broke again. I'll bet you haven't got a cent in your pocket.

STEWART.

You win. I haven't even got a pocket.

LANNON.

Well I figured on that. Now, I'll give you five thousand.

STEWART.

Five thousand what?

LANNON.

Five thousand dollars, of course.

STEWART.

Of course; of course. Mister, the more I hear you talk the better I like you. You were saying, you give me five thousand dollars and—

LANNON.

You skip out and don't come back. I don't want to see you any more.

STEWART.

You give me the money and you won't see me—or it—any more.

LANNON.

Before you go, telephone Daintry—he's at the Quadrant Club—and leave him in charge of everything here. He's a good man. He's one of us.

STEWART.

Daintry's one of us, is he?

LANNON.

Yes. He'll do whatever I say. He's got to.

STEWART.

All right. I'll phone him before I go.

LANNON.

Now, I got a paper for you to sign. A statement that all the materials and supplies are up to specifications. That will let me out if there is any trouble. (*Lays a paper on the desk. STEWART crosses right, sits at the desk, and takes a pen.*)

STEWART.

What name shall I sign?

LANNON.

(*Crossing left, stops and looks in surprise.*)
Sign your own name, of course.

STEWART.

Of course, I never thought of that. (*Aside.*)
What the deuce is my name? (*After a pause, showing his mental struggle, he throws down the pen.*)
I can't sign that. (*Rises.*)

LANNON.

Eh? Why not? Are you trying to crawfish?

STEWART.

No, no. Only—do me a favor, will you? Take

a run around the block. Come back in about five minutes. Then I'll sign.

LANNON.

Well—(*Crosses to desk at right and picks up paper.*) Five minutes; no longer. (*Crosses to outside door and puts on his hat.*) And remember—no shenanigan. You know me. (*Opens outside door, goes out and closes it.*)

STEWART.

I do not. I wonder who that guy is. Five thousand dollars for a word, and I can't guess it. His name must be around here somewhere. (*Excitedly grabs up books on desk and table. Opens one and reads the fly leaf.*) "To my dear nephew from his dear aunt." (*Throws down book, picks up another.*) "To my dear brother." (*Throws it down and picks up a photo of girl; reads*) "From Peaches to Ducky." (*Disgusted.*) "Peaches!" "Ducky!" Good Lord! (*Pushes electric button on left wall and stands left, thinking.*)

After a pause, BOLTON enters from the hall.

BOLTON.

Did you ring, sir?

STEWART.

Yes. Have I any visiting cards?

BOLTON.

(*Closing the door.*)

Yes, sir; in your card case, sir.

STEWART.

Where is my card case?

BOLTON.

In your room, sir. Shall I get it?

STEWART.

Yes. (BOLTON goes into the bedroom. STEWART shows exultation. He taps his head.) Some idea, that.

BOLTON enters from the bedroom.

BOLTON.

It's gone, sir.

STEWART.

Gone?

BOLTON.

Burglar must have taken it, sir. (STEWART groans. BOLTON is about to go out through the center door.)

STEWART.

Just a moment. I'll have to have some more cards printed. Attend to it.

BOLTON.

Yes, sir.

STEWART.

If I remember rightly, my name was spelled wrong on the last batch.

BOLTON.

Pardon me, sir, but I think not, sir. I was very particular with the copy, sir.

STEWART.

How was it spelled?

BOLTON.

It was spelled with an "e," sir.

STEWART.

Spelled with an "e." (Turns away in disgust. BOLTON exits into the hall, closing the center door after him. STEWART sees an umbrella in the right corner, takes it up and examines it.) Maybe he has his name engraved on the handle Yes, here it is. (Reads.) "Pat—Pat—Patented July 12, 1906." (Stands at

center, facing the audience, thinking. Rubs his right leg with his left foot, displaying his bare ankle. EVA LOU knocks at the center door.) Here's where I lose \$5,000. (EVA LOU knocks again.) Oh, come in.

EVA LOU enters from the hall. She is in an evening dress of some bright color in strong contrast with the woodwork of the door. STEWART stands with his back to the door for a couple of seconds. Then he turns his head and sees EVA LOU. He opens the umbrella, trying to hide his bare ankles.

STEWART.

Hey! Don't come in here. Get out. (Crouches down endeavoring to hide his ankles with his bathrobe, and tries to wave her away.)

EVA LOU.

(Stands with her back against the door, her hand on the knob; in surprise.)

Why, Mr. Browne!

STEWART.

(Excitedly.)

Browne! Browne; that's it! (Goes down center in front of the desk and writes on a card.) "B-r-o-w-n-e." Spell it with an "e." Now, if I could only get the first name—or even an initial. (To EVA LOU who is about to go.) Hey! Don't go. Come back.

EVA LOU.

(Turning.)

Really, Mr. Browne, this is outrageous.

STEWART.

I know; I know. You'll have to excuse me. I'm not myself to-night.

EVA LOU.

Meaningless phrases will not excuse your insolence, sir. You must explain.

STEWART.

I was startled. The conventions, you know. Young lady; bachelor apartment; late at night.

EVA LOU.

If you think your sense of propriety will not stand the strain, I can easily call my aunt. She is just across the hall.

STEWART.

No, no. (*Smiling.*) If the worst comes to the worst, I can scream for help.

EVA LOU.

(*Half smiling.*)

You certainly are shy, aren't you?

STEWART.

Sure, I'm shy. I'm shy a pair of pants.

EVA LOU.

(*Going to the hall door.*)

I will call on you again in the morning. Perhaps you will have completed your toilet by that time.

STEWART.

I'll be miles away from here in the morning, I hope.

EVA LOU.

(*Turning.*)

You can't mean that you are leaving town while the work is in this critical condition?

STEWART.

I am in a critical condition myself.

EVA LOU.
(*Turning.*)

Mr. Browne, I came here to-night to ask your help. We have never been friends. In fact, I have never liked you, personally. I cannot approve of your mode of life. You spend your nights drinking and carousing, and your days in footless recreations, while your subordinates do your work, and do it badly. But, personalities aside, I know you to be a great engineer. The man who could make those magnificent drawings is nothing short of a genius.

(*She points to the blue prints on the wall behind STEWART. He turns, sees the blue prints for the first time, and gasps.*)

STEWART.

Why—that's my work!

EVA LOU.

I know it.

STEWART.

But you don't understand. I—me—myself. (*Tap-ping his chest.*) I did that. I can prove it.

EVA LOU.

You would be wasting your time proving the axiomatic. The world knows you made those drawings, Mr. Browne.

STEWART.

No; not Browne; Stewart, Jack Stewart drew those plans.

EVA LOU.

A moment ago you said they were yours.

STEWART.

Well, I am Jack Stewart.

EVA LOU.

You are an idiot.

STEWART.

Oh, what's the use. (*Turns to print.*) I spent the best years of my life on those plans.

EVA LOU.

That is very probable.

STEWART.

(*In stupefaction.*)

Well, I'll be hanged!

EVA LOU.

That is also very probable—but not at all interesting. Good night. (*Starts for the hall door.*)

STEWART.

(*Reaching over desk, he tries to catch at her dress, but fails.*)

Wait; wait. Tell me what you want me to do.

EVA LOU.

(*Turning.*)

I want you to buckle down and do the work you are paid to do. I want you to get some system into this muddle. You are thousands of dollars over your estimate, and weeks behind in your work.

STEWART.

It requires both time and money for big undertakings.

EVA LOU.

There's no reason why the hard rock men should be allowed to play quoits on the company's time. There's no reason why the steel men should lie around waiting for material when I, personally, know there have been three cars of girders on a siding at Yuba Junction for the past ten days.

STEWART.

Those are details of construction, and should be looked after by the sub-engineers.

EVA LOU.

I know. But Daintry and the other engineers are worse than you are. There's only one man on the staff that's worth his salt. That's the little Scotchman, MacIntosh; and he can't attend to everything.

STEWART.

If I were to promise that I would take hold of this job, and rush it through on schedule, would you shake hands and be friends?

EVA LOU.

With all my heart.

STEWART.

(*Seriously.*)

Then shake. I promise. (*They shake hands over the desk.*) Now don't worry. Everything is going to come out fine, as the man said when he fell into the sausage machine. (*Retains her hand.*)

EVA LOU.

Thank you, Mr. Browne. I know you can do it if you'll only try. And now I think I'd better go. And if you don't need my hand any longer, I'll take it with me.

STEWART.

(*Releasing her hand.*)

I beg your pardon. I'm so forgetful.

EVA LOU.

There's something else I think I ought to tell you. It's about Lannon.

STEWART.

Lannon?

EVA LOU.

Yes. You know he and father are political enemies. And in spite of the fact that he is outwardly friendly I am sure that he hates dad and would be glad to see him ruined.

STEWART.

What harm can he do?

EVA LOU.

You should know best about that. I should imagine that a contractor could do very serious harm if he were so disposed—and were not carefully watched.

STEWART.

I hardly think—

EVA LOU.

(Interrupting.)

That isn't all. He wants to marry me. Good night, Mr. Browne.

STEWART.

Say—we are going to be friends, aren't we?

EVA LOU.

On certain conditions.

STEWART.

Well, as we are going to be friends, don't you think you ought to call me by my first name?

EVA LOU.

Call you by your first name? What a ridiculous idea! I couldn't think of it.

STEWART.

I can't think of it either.

EVA LOU.

Well, good night (*as she opens the door*)—Tom.
(*Runs out into the hall and slams the door.*)

STEWART.

(*Coming down stage.*)

Tom Browne. An honest name for a couple of crooks. Dandy girl, that; class, too. Browne steals my drawings, but he isn't engineer enough to put it over. Gets things all muddled up, then blows the job. I come along—look exactly like Browne. Man says he'll give me five thousand dollars to go away. Girl offers her friendship if I'll stay. (*After a pause.*) I'd like to stay, but—five thousand dollars is some item. (*Goes left.*)

LANNON *enters from outside through right door, and comes down center.*

LANNON.

(*Taking a paper from his pocket.*)

Let's get through with this. I saw Daintry at the Quadrant. He'll be here in a couple of minutes for instructions. Sign this before he comes. (*Puts paper on the desk.*)

STEWART.

What's the rush? Got the money?

(LANNON *hands STEWART a check.* STEWART *looks at it.*)

STEWART.

Lannon; is your name Lannon?

LANNON.

What the devil do you think it is—Santa Claus? What's the matter with you, anyway?

STEWART.

Lannon, eh? (*Starts to tear the check up.*)

LANNON.

Hey! What are you doing? (*Starts forward.*)

STEWART.

I'm turning honest, mister. And it hurts.

LANNON.

But you're going away, aren't you?

STEWART.

No.

LANNON.

(*Taking a quick step forward and glaring at STEWART, who looks him steadily in the eye.*)

I'll break you for this, Browne.

STEWART.

I'm broke, already. (*Goes to left. Rings bell.*)
Let me tell you something, Mr. Lannon. You're annoying a friend of mine, a young lady. You want to stop it, or you and I will go to the mat. (*Comes center.*)

LANNON.

A friend of yours? Who is it?

STEWART.

I don't know her name, but it goes, just the same.
(*BOLTON enters from the hall.*) Bolton, show this gentleman the door; both sides. (*BOLTON crosses to door at right and holds it open.*)

LANNON.

I know. You're full of dope now, and feeling chesty. To-morrow when it wears off you'll be whining around like a whipped cur. Oh, I know you.

STEWART.

No, Lannon. You only think you do.

LANNON.

You think you're mighty clever, but you're a fool.

STEWART.

Ha, ha! He does know me.

LANNON.

(In high anger.)

Don't forget I know you're a thief!

STEWART.

(Quietly.)

A thief! *(Stands perfectly rigid, with his face to the audience.)*

LANNON.

Ah; you forgot I knew about your stealing the plans.

STEWART.

(Realizing that LANNON is not referring to his recent attempt at burglary, shows relief, drops tense pose and speaks cheerfully.)

Oh, yes; the plans. I did forget about them. Well, good night, Lannon. Be careful of the steps as you go out.

LANNON.

(Crosses to right door angrily, turns and glares at BROWNE; in disgust.)

Aw! *(Exits right.)*

STEWART.

Bolton, come here. *(BOLTON comes to center.)* I won't need a valet after to-night. You're dismissed.

BOLTON.

(Aghast.)

Dismissed? But your clothes, sir! How—?

STEWART.

(Interrupting casually.)

It may be that tying my own necktie and pulling on my own pants will be too great a strain on my feeble intellect, but I'm going to make a stab at it.

BOLTON.

I've served you long and faithfully, and I am—

STEWART.

I understand. I'm sorry.

BOLTON.

I'm not a rich man, sir. My family—

STEWART.

(Firmly.)

Bolton, you are discharged.

BOLTON.

(Dejectedly.)

Yes, sir. *(Turns up stage.)*

STEWART.

I need a private secretary, Bolton; one who will be loyal. Do you think you could qualify for the job?

BOLTON.

(Surprised, but controlling himself.)

Yes, sir.

STEWART.

Then take some dictation on the machine and have the letters ready to mail in the morning.

BOLTON.

Yes, sir. *(Sits at desk and prepares typewriter.)*

STEWART.

(Going to telephone.)

Where can I get MacIntosh on the phone?

BOLTON.

Construction camp, sir. (*Feeds a sheet of paper into the machine.*)

STEWART.

(*At phone.*)

Hello; get me MacIntosh, of the engineers, at construction camp. * * MacIntosh. * * Call me when you get him. (*Hangs up.*)

BOLTON.

All ready, sir.

STEWART.

(*Standing left center.*)

To Yardmaster, Yuba Junction.

BOLTON.

(*Writes on machine, and repeats.*)

"Yuba Junction."

STEWART.

Had bills of lading for three cars of steel a week ago.

BOLTON.

"——a week ago"——

STEWART.

Why in hell haven't they been delivered?

DAINTRY comes in right door, quickly, while BOLTON is typing.

(*During the ensuing dialogue, BOLTON finishes typing the last line that STEWART has dictated, takes the letter from the machine, inserts a fresh sheet of paper and sits there quietly, awaiting further dictation and enjoying DAINTRY's discomfiture.*)

DAINTRY.

(*As he enters.*)

I say, Browne, what's this I hear about you and Lannon? You must be a bally rotter——

STEWART.

(*Stepping forward quickly, meeting DAINTRY at center.*)

Take off that hat.

DAINTRY.

Oh, I say, now, Browne—

STEWART.

(*Poking DAINTRY in the chest with his finger.*)

Take off that hat! (DAINTRY, *amazed, takes off his hat.*) You come in here with your hat on and smoking a rimfire cigar, just as if you owned the place. Can't you see I'm dictating? You wait until I'm through; then I'll talk to you. (*To BOLTON.*) If cars are not here by to-morrow afternoon, I'll go after you and make you eat bills of lading. Signed. (*To DAINTRY.*) Now what do you want?

DAINTRY.

(*Protesting.*)

Say, Browne, you're mighty 'igh-'anded.

STEWART.

(*Curtly.*)

You're fired.

DAINTRY.

Fired! What do you mean?

STEWART.

(*Poking finger.*)

Fired—sacked—dismissed—discharged. You're through. Can you get that into your thick head?

DAINTRY.

(*Defiantly.*)

Huh! I guess Lannon will have something to say about that.

STEWART.

He'll have a proud chance to-morrow. Now, you're a big man, but it's mostly fat and conversation. If you are on the job in the morning when I get down, I'm going to take a minute and a half off and trim you down to a mere figure of speech.

DAINTRY.

You mean I've got to leave to-night?

STEWART.

You grasp the idea exactly.

DAINTRY.

Why am I discharged?

STEWART.

For being incompetent; for not attending to your business.

DAINTRY.

Maybe if you had attended to your business I might have done better.

STEWART.

(After a pause.)

That's so, Daintry. Maybe you're not altogether to blame. I'll give you another chance. But you'll have to take your orders from MacIntosh.

DAINTRY.

(Hotly and loudly.)

Me play second-fiddle to that blasted Scotchman?

(Phone rings hard.)

STEWART.

(Going to phone.)

Second fiddle? You're mighty lucky if you turn the music. *(At phone.)* Hello? * * That you.

MacIntosh? * * This is Browne. (*Shouts.*) You're promoted, Mac. * * You will have full charge under me. Daintry will take his orders from you.

AUNT JULE *enters from the hall. She is in a white dressing gown, and wears a cap.*

AUNT JULE.

What is the meaning of all this outlandish noise?

STEWART.

(*Waving his hand.*)

Sh!

AUNT JULE.

(*With dignity.*)

Young man, do you know whom you are "shush"-ing?

STEWART.

(*At phone.*)

Have every man in camp on the job at seven o'clock. Ring the bell to-night.

AUNT JULE.

(*Emphatically.*)

I want to know what this means—ringing bells, banging typewriters, shouting at the top of your voices, at ten o'clock at night and my nerves all of a twitter.

STEWART.

(*At phone.*)

No, Mac. It's not a fight. * * Some crazy woman just broke into my room in a nightdress.

AUNT JULE.

"Nightdress!"

(*BOLTON laughs uncontrollably. AUNT JULE gazes at him. He subsides.*)

STEWART.

(*To AUNT JULE.*)

See what you've done? You've made him laugh.
(*To BOLTON.*) Bolton, I didn't think you could do it. Your salary is raised.

BOLTON.

Thank you, sir. (*Resumes typewriting.*)

STEWART.

(*Coming to center.*)

Now, Daintry, I want you on the job at seven o'clock.

DAINTRY.

All right.

AUNT JULE.

(*Standing behind STEWART.*)

Young man.

STEWART.

(*Ignoring her.*)

I want you to lay off half the hard rock men.

DAINTRY.

Yes.

AUNT JULE.

(*More loudly.*)

Mr. Browne.

STEWART.

And make the others speed up at the drills.

AUNT JULE.

(*Tapping STEWART on the shoulder.*)

Young man, I'm speaking to you.

STEWART.

(*Turning.*)

Excuse me. I thought you said "Browne."

AUNT JULE.

Well—that's your name, isn't it?

STEWART.

(*Confused.*)

Yes. Yes, of course. But you should say it with an "e."

AUNT JULE.

Young man,—

(*She is interrupted by the sound of a gong ringing rapidly in the distance.*)

STEWART.

(*Smiling.*)

It doesn't take MacIntosh long to get into action.
(*Crosses left.*)

COLONEL LANE *rushes in from the hall, in his pajamas.*

LANE.

Great salt mackerel, Browne! What's the matter?

STEWART.

Just stirring things up a little. Got to get this job done on schedule.

LANE.

(*Amazed.*)

He's woke up at last! (*To AUNT JULE.*) What are you doing running around half-dressed?

AUNT JULE.

I've got more on than you have.

STEWART.

(*Smiles.*)

I'm going to bed. Call me early, Bolton. (*Crosses right.*)

BOLTON.

Nine o'clock, sir?

STEWART.

(*At door of bedroom, turns.*)

Six.

LANE.

Six o'clock! Lord! It must have been those baths.

STEWART.

And Bolton; see if you can dig me up a pair of pants.

LANE.

(With mock seriousness.)

And Bolton; dig up a pair for Aunt Jule, too.

AUNT JULE.

Dave Lane!

STEWART.

That will be all for to-night, Daintry. *(DAINTRY starts to cross right toward outside door.)*

EVA LOU enters from the hall, in a bright kimono.

EVA LOU.

Dad! Aunt Jule! What is it? Is there a burglar in the house?

STEWART.

(Comes center.)

Yes, miss; there's a burglar in the house. And he has come to stay.

POSITIONS.

DAINTRY at right door, about to exit; BOLTON at desk, busy with letters; STEWART and EVA LOU up center; AUNT JULE down left; LANE at hall door.

CURTAIN.



PUTTING IT OVER

THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE: *Engineer's general offices at the dam, six weeks later. The room is of rough board construction, with an outside door left of center, and a large window right of center, in the rear wall. Through the window and open door is afforded a view of a deep gorge and mountainous country in the distance, and a dam with derrick, steam shovel, etc., in the middle distance. (Where special scenery is not available, a mountain landscape or rocky pass drop will serve for the backing.)*

Beside the entrance from out-of-doors, the room has three other doors, which should be of the office type with glass panelling, if possible. A door in the center of the left wall is marked "Yuba Irrigation Co." In the right wall, up stage, is a door marked "Chief of Engineers," and nearer the footlights is a door marked "Contractor's Office." These three doors should all have plain interior backing.

Against the rear wall, between door and window, is a chair. There are chairs at either side of the Company office at the left, and down right of center is a plain wooden table, with a chair back of it and another at its left. On the table is a telephone. A hatrack is left of the outside door. The room may be further dressed with wastebasket, office filing cabinet, etc.

When the curtain rises, DAINTRY is seated back of the table, and LANNON at the left of the table.

DAINTRY's manner clearly shows that he is dog-tired.

DAINTRY.

(*Complaining.*)

That fellow Browne is a regular slave driver. By Jove, I've not had a breathing spell for six weeks.

LANNON.

(*Curtly.*)

Why don't you stop? Lay down on him?

DAINTRY.

I can't. That's the worst of it. You see, the bally rotter works twice as hard as any one else. One has to do one's best to save one's face.

LANNON.

He's a whale for work, all right. Gad, I never saw such a change in a man.

DAINTRY.

(*Leaning over.*)

Lannon, I believe he suspects something.

LANNON.

(*Uncomfortably.*)

What do you mean?

DAINTRY.

About the low grade hydraulic cement.

LANNON.

What makes you think so?

DAINTRY.

Twice I've run across him late at night measuring those blasted abutments. Twice he has made me verify his figures on the factor of safety. And I am certain the man he was showing about the works yesterday was a government expert. Of course, he

couldn't actually discover anything. It's too cleverly covered.

LANNON.

(After a moment's thought.)

Daintry, I never told you, because I didn't think it was necessary. But Browne knows about the cement.

DAINTRY.

(Springing to his feet.)

What?

LANNON.

He found it out six weeks ago, and charged me with grafting.

DAINTRY.

What did you say?

LANNON.

Bluffed him.

DAINTRY.

Then what's his game? *(Sits.)*

LANNON.

Don't know. He's got me guessing. Either he has forgotten about it, or he is the most consummate hypocrite in the world.

DAINTRY.

"Forgotten." How could a man forget a thing like that?

LANNON.

Well, you know he is—or was—some kind of a drug fiend. He was pretty well lit up the night he told me about it. Might be just possible that the hop made him forget about it. *(Shrugs.)* Well, one way or the other, it doesn't make much difference. I have the money, and to-morrow the governor of the State will set his seal of approval on the work. The band will play, the flags will be flying, and they'll turn the water on.

DAINTRY.

(*Seriously.*)

And by night the flags will still be flying—half-mast.

LANNON.

Nonsense!

DAINTRY.

When the dam goes, it will take its toll of human life.

LANNON.

(*Blustering.*)

Now, for the love of heaven, don't start croaking.

DAINTRY.

(*Leans back in the chair, his feet on the table.*)

Listen, Lannon. You think that under pressure the dam will slowly disintegrate—gradually rot away; that it will take days, even months, for it to be destroyed. But I know different. Heavy construction work doesn't act that way under high pressure. It will stand the stress until the factor of safety has been eliminated. Then a crash, and a tremendous head of water will rush through the gulch, sweeping everything before it. Don't forget—water is the most irresistible force God ever created or man ever tried to handle.

LANNON.

What of it? There's only one ranch in the direct line of the water—the "Double-O." All the punchers will be here to-morrow, and I have personally invited Mr. and Mrs. Ring to spend the day with us. Of course, there will be some destruction of property. But you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. By the way, your end of the money was to be \$3,000, wasn't it?

DAINTRY.

Yes.

LANNON.

(*Sneering.*)

I don't suppose your conscience will permit you to take tainted money?

DAINTRY.

(*Snarling.*)

Don't try any games with me, Lannon. I did the work, and I want my money.

LANNON.

(*With a dry laugh.*)

Oh, all right. Don't get excited. I just wanted to know the money value of your moral principles. I'll pay you in cash. We won't have a record of the transaction at the banks.

The center door is opened from outside.

DAINTRY.

Sh.

BOLTON *enters and stands holding the door open, looking off right.*

LANNON.

(*Looks around.*)

Hello, Bolton. Where's your master?

BOLTON.

(*Quietly.*)

I call no man "master," Mr. Lannon.

(*STEWART passes the window on his way to the door from back right.*)

LANNON.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Excuse me, Bolton. I forgot you were emancipated.

BOLTON.

If you mean Mr. Browne, he is right here.

STEWART *has entered during BOLTON's last speech, and stands quietly in the doorway. He is dressed in khaki, with leggings, and a linen shirt of some solid color. He carries his coat on his arm, and wears a soft felt hat. His looks and actions show that he has been under considerable strain for some time. His speech is crisp.*

STEWART.

(*Sharply.*)

Well, Daintry?

DAINTRY.

(*Springs to his feet, almost bringing his hand to a salute but remembering in time to check himself.*)

Yes, sir.

STEWART.

What is it?

DAINTRY.

(*Taking papers from pocket.*)

Some communications regarding the disposition of the excursion trains and the governor's private car from the junction, sir.

STEWART.

You know that Bolton attends to all minor details not directly connected with the works.

DAINTRY.

Yes, but I thought the governor—

STEWART.

Give them to Bolton.

DAINTRY.

Yes, sir. (*Hands the papers to BOLTON and starts to go.*)

STEWART.

And about the seepage; did you examine into it?

DAINTRY.

(*Turning.*)

No, sir; not as yet, sir.

STEWART.

Well, do. And let me know the amount of concrete required to stop it.

DAINTRY.

(*At center door.*)

Yes, sir. As you say, sir. (*Goes outside and closes door after him.*)

LANNON.

(*Imitating DAINTRY.*)

"Yes, sir." "No, sir." "As you say, sir." Gad! Daintry and Bolton appear to have changed places. (*Crosses to right, about to go into his office—the one marked "Contractor's Office."*)

STEWART.

Just a moment, Lannon. I want to have a talk with you. (LANNON turns and nods. STEWART addresses BOLTON.) I wish you would make a statement of my personal account with the company.

BOLTON.

To date?

STEWART.

Yes.

BOLTON.

Very well. (*He goes into STEWART's office—the one marked "Chief of Engineers."*)

STEWART.

(*Coming center.*)

Well Lannon, the dam is finished.

LANNON.

Yes? I suppose congratulations are in order.

STEWART.

It is apparently as safe and sound as a proposition in geometry, but there's something wrong about it. Do you know what it is?

LANNON.

Why do you ask me? I'm only the contractor.

STEWART.

It is because you are only the contractor that I ask you. No unit of strength has been overlooked in the construction. If the dam has a weakness, it must be the material used in the building.

LANNON.

You passed on every ounce of material I supplied. I've got your signature.

STEWART.

(*Not satisfied.*)

Yes.

LANNON.

(*Crossly.*)

Say, Browne, what is this? Cross-examination? What the devil do I care about your impressions? I've got work to do. I want to get through early. Torrence came in last night. (*Crosses to his door at the right.*)

STEWART.

Torrence who?

LANNON.

(*Turning quickly.*)

What's that?

STEWART.

(Catching himself.)

Beg pardon. I was thinking of something else. What did you say, anyway?

LANNON.

(Speaking very distinctly.)

I said, Torrence got in last night.

STEWART.

Ah; is that so? That's good.

LANNON.

(After a pause, in disgust.)

Aw! *(Exits into his office down right.)*

BOLTON *enters from Chief of Engineer's office up right.*

STEWART.

Bolton, who or what is "Torrence"?

BOLTON.

Torrence is the name of Mr. Lannon's only daughter. She has returned from abroad.

STEWART.

(Relieved.)

Whew! That was close. I didn't know whether it was a girl or a sleeping car.

BOLTON.

(Hands papers to STEWART.)

Here is the statement. *(Reads over STEWART's shoulder.)* "On deposit, April 20th, seven hundred dollars. Drawn against, one hundred and fifty dollars. Balance on deposit, five hundred and fifty dollars."

STEWART.

Five hundred and fifty dollars. I'm a regular plutocrat, eh, Bolton? Sit down, I want to talk to you. (BOLTON *sits at left of desk.*) Bolton, you had better prepare yourself for a great shock. I am not Tom Browne.

BOLTON.

(*Quietly.*)

I know it.

STEWART.

(*Startled.*)

You know it?

BOLTON.

Yes; I have known it for some time. To be exact, from the night you came here.

STEWART.

Well, I'll be hanged! If you knew, why didn't you expose me?

BOLTON.

I wanted you to stay here and impersonate my mas—(*corrects himself*) Mr. Browne, until I could find him and bring him back. It was the only way to avoid scandal.

STEWART.

Did you find him?

BOLTON.

Yes.

STEWART.

You did? Where is he now?

BOLTON.

In a hospital in Kansas City. He met with a terrible accident. He was injured about the head, and has been delirious ever since. I was told he had been married that very morning.

STEWART.

Married? That was a terrible accident.

BOLTON.

(Ignoring the jest.)

I had a letter this morning. He has quite recovered.

STEWART.

I suppose he'll come back here.

BOLTON.

That would seem to rest entirely with you.

STEWART.

You think I should step quietly out? Let him resume his old position, and take the credit due me?

BOLTON.

That would be a generous thing to do.

STEWART.

Why should I?

BOLTON.

Because it's the right thing to do, and because you are the kind of a man who does the right thing.

STEWART.

(Laughs.)

Well, I guess you're right, Bolton. If Browne wants to come back he may do so, and no one need be the wiser, as far as I'm concerned.

BOLTON.

Thank you, Mr. Browne. *(Shakes his hand and goes to STEWART's office door at right.)*

STEWART.

I have got a little work to do here. I wish you'd look in once in a while and see if I'm still awake. I'm about all in.

BOLTON.

Very well. *(Exits into STEWART's office.)*

STEWART.

(Yawns, goes to table, sits, and takes telephone.)

Hello; hello. * * Get me construction. * * *(Pause.)*
Is that you, Mac? * * Listen carefully, Mac. I want you to get me a sample of the cement that was under the first layer of rubble. * * I know it was all used, but try and find the bags it was shipped in. * * Get me enough to make a test; a handful will do. *(EVA LOU and TORRENCE cross outside, passing by the window from the right.)* I'll depend on you, Mac.

EVA LOU.

(Off stage.)

Oh, I had a dandy time. I was on the go thirty-six out of twenty-four hours.

EVA LOU enters center, crosses to left door—marked *Company*—and exits. TORRENCE enters at the same time with her, and sees STEWART, whom she mistakes for BROWNE. She looks after EVA LOU, and drops a glove as she runs to STEWART, kneels beside him, while he is bending over the telephone, throws arms around him and kisses him.

TORRENCE.

(In a low, impassioned voice.)

Oh, dear heart! Dear heart! How I missed you! *(Kisses him.)* Six weeks have been six eternities! *(Kisses him again.)* Why didn't you answer my letters, dear? *(Kisses him again.)*

EVA LOU.

(Off left, calls.)

Torrence.

TORRENCE.

(Rising and hastily picking up her glove as EVA LOU appears at the door.)

I dropped my gloves. Don't you think they are pretty? So cheap, too—only three-ninety-eight. (*Both exeunt into Company office at left.*)

STEWART.

(*Stands with the telephone in his hand. After a pause, he smiles, and calls after her loudly.*)

Call again! (*Stands laughing, and suddenly starts as though he heard someone at the phone. Sits and talks into phone.*) What's that? * * You're crazy! * * I never called you "dear heart." Say, Mac, you want to be careful. When a man imagines he hears people calling him "dear heart," he's in a bad way. You want to leave the ladies alone. They're getting on your mind.

AUNT JULE *enters from outside.*

STEWART.

(*To phone.*)

Now, don't swear. It's against the rules of the telephone company. It says so in the book. (AUNT JULE *comes down stage.*) I positively refuse to listen to such language. (*Hangs up the receiver.*)

AUNT JULE.

Young man, I wish to talk to you.

STEWART.

(*Rising and putting on his coat.*)

Delighted, I'm sure.

AUNT JULE.

I am, as you are aware, the only sister of your employer.

STEWART.

Yes. Have a chair. (*Offers her a chair.*)

AUNT JULE.

(*Sitting.*)

I am also the aunt and guardian of Miss Lane.

STEWART.

Quite so. Have another chair.

AUNT JULE.

Mr. Browne, for some weeks you have been paying marked attention to my niece, Miss Lane.

STEWART.

Yes.

AUNT JULE.

As her nearest surviving female relative, it is my duty to tell you that your suit is hopeless. You are a comparatively poor man, Mr. Browne. You find it hard to live within your salary.

STEWART.

I'd find it hard to live without it.

AUNT JULE.

Then there is the question of family. You must admit that the name of Browne is very—(*Pauses.*)

STEWART.

(*Smiling.*)

Popular.

AUNT JULE.

“Common” expresses it better. Miss Lane is connected with one of the finest English families. You, I presume, have no family to speak of.

STEWART.

Er—not yet.

AUNT JULE.

Her maternal grandfather was the late, lamented Lord Durham who got into the public eye by being

suspended from parliament on account of his radical speech on the Asiatic question.

STEWART.

My paternal grandfather was the late lamented John Browne, who got into the public eye by being suspended from a sour apple tree as we go marching on.

AUNT JULE.

In Columbus, Ohio, where Colonel Lane resides, my niece is a reigning belle, and in our frequent trips abroad she moves in the very best society. I lived in London until recently, with my cousin, an English baronet. When I came over to this country, to Columbus, I—

STEWART.

What was that last remark?

AUNT JULE.

I said, I came over to Columbus.

STEWART.

Excuse me. I thought you said you came over with Columbus.

AUNT JULE.

The idea! Why, Columbus came over in 1776.

STEWART.

Did he? That's startling, if true.

AUNT JULE.

(*Confused.*)

Of course not. I was thinking of Abraham Lincoln.

STEWART.

I don't think you need to say any more. I am quite aware of my insignificance.

BOLTON *enters from STEWART's office at right.*

BOLTON.

Pardon me.

STEWART.

What is it, Bolton?

BOLTON.

I just wanted to see if you were awake.

STEWART.

Thank you. (*BOLTON returns to STEWART's office. STEWART addresses AUNT JULE, rising.*) You will excuse me? This is my busy day.

AUNT JULE.

I hope you understand what I have been saying.

STEWART.

I understand thoroughly. You have advanced a number of reasons why I should not marry your niece. Reason number one, I'm poor. Reason number two, her grandfather was the original old Bull Durham.

AUNT JULE.

(*Correcting him ponderously.*)

Lord Durham.

STEWART.

You have overlooked the most important reason.

AUNT JULE.

What's that?

STEWART.

Miss Lane wouldn't marry me if I were worth a million, and were a descendant of old King Cole.

AUNT JULE.

Perhaps not. But I am free to say she shows considerable interest in you.

STEWART.

Yes; the same sort of interest she'd show in some

new kind of a bug that had fallen into the sugar-bowl.

AUNT JULE.

Well, I want you to know that I am not prejudiced against you personally. I am not a woman of narrow views. I am, generally speaking, a—

STEWART.

(*At his office door.*)

I've noticed that. Good day, madam. (*Exit into his office.*)

AUNT JULE.

Impertinent young scamp!

TORRENCE *enters hastily from Company office.*

TORRENCE.

Oh, Aunt Jule. (*Comes to center.*)

AUNT JULE.

My name is Mrs. Lane-Turner.

TORRENCE.

I beg your pardon. I am looking for Mr. Browne. Have you seen him?

AUNT JULE.

(*Crossing to left.*)

I am not Mr. Browne's keeper.

TORRENCE.

Indeed! Mr. Browne is to be congratulated.

AUNT JULE.

When I was a girl it was customary to show respect to one's elders.

TORRENCE.

But that was a long time ago. Other times, other manners, you know.

AUNT JULE.

What's more, we didn't traipse around after young unmarried men. We let them do the courting.

TORRENCE.

Indeed! How in the world did you ever manage to get married?

AUNT JULE.

The late Mr. Turner used frequently to say, "That Lannon girl will bring her father's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave." (*Exits into Company office, left.*)

LANNON *enters from Contractor's office, down right.*

TORRENCE.

(*Looking after AUNT JULE.*)

Darned old cat!

LANNON.

Here! Honey, honey! What kind of talk is that? (*Sits at left of table.*)

TORRENCE.

I'm sorry, dad. But that old woman makes me so mad with her hyphenated name, her "tut-tut," and her "late Mr. Turner." I'll bet she's glad he's late. (*Crosses and sits on arm of LANNON's chair, smoothing his hair.*) I won't bring your gray hairs in sorrow to the grave, will I, dad?

LANNON.

Not as long as I can buy hair dye.

TORRENCE.

Did you miss me while I was away?

LANNON.

You bet I did.

TORRENCE.

Did you get all my letters?

LANNON.

Yep. Did you get all my checks?

TORRENCE.

Meaning that I never wrote to you unless I wanted money?

LANNON.

No, no. Just a casual remark.

TORRENCE.

(Laying cheek on LANNON's head.)

You're the dearest old dad in all the world—

LANNON.

(Putting his hand in his pocket.)

How much this time?

TORRENCE.

Oh, it isn't money.

LANNON.

What is it, then? Are you sick?

TORRENCE.

If you found out that I had done something wicked, could you forgive me?

LANNON.

"Wicked?"

TORRENCE.

Not so awfully wicked. Suppose sometime I should get married without your consent. What would you do?

LANNON.

Torrence, you haven't fallen in love with one of those wop dukes?

TORRENCE.

Uh-uh. (*Meaning "no."*)

LANNON.

Thank the Lord for that. You can marry anyone you like, always providing he is an American—and straight.

TORRENCE.

Then I am going to confess something. I—

EVA LOU *enters, from Company office at left.*

EVA LOU.

Oh, gosh! I can't stand Aunt Jule this morning.

LANNON.

(*Rising.*)

Miss Lane.

EVA LOU.

How do you do, Mr. Lannon. (*To TORRENCE.*)
Did you buy lots of nice things in Paris?

TORRENCE.

You bet. Fine linen petticoats. Just as sheer. I didn't get many, though. You can't tell what they'll wear next season. But I got trunks and trunks of the daintiest—(*Turning head.*) What are you waiting for, dad?

LANNON.

Huh? I didn't know I was waiting.

TORRENCE.

But Eva and I want to talk.

LANNON.

Go ahead and talk. Can't you talk about anything that's fit for your father to hear?

TORRENCE.

Oh, pshaw! It's no fun talking about things that are fit for fathers to hear.

LANNON.

All right, I'll go. But don't be long. (*Exits into his office at right.*)

TORRENCE.

(*Looking after him.*)

Poor dad. Eva Lou, why don't you marry him and put him out of his misery?

EVA LOU.

Your father? How can you think of such a thing?

TORRENCE.

Why not? He's got scads of money. He's a good sort. No bad habits.

EVA LOU.

He's too old.

TORRENCE.

Old? He's not in his second childhood. He can still get around and take solid food. (*Shrewdly.*) I believe there's someone else. Who is he?

EVA LOU.

That's a secret.

TORRENCE.

Well, you needn't put on airs. I've got a secret, too.

EVA LOU.

What is it?

TORRENCE.

I'm married.

EVA LOU.

You're joking.

TORRENCE.

No, I'm not. I've been married six weeks.

EVA LOU.

Secretly?

TORRENCE.

Yes.

EVA LOU.

In Paris?

TORRENCE.

No; in this country.

EVA LOU.

Who's the man?

TORRENCE.

That's the secret.

EVA LOU.

Do I know him?

TORRENCE.

Uh-huh. (*Meaning "yes."*)

EVA LOU.

(*Considering.*)

Let me see.

TORRENCE.

Now don't start guessing, because I won't tell you. (*Puts her hand over her mouth.*)

EVA LOU.

Is it Derverson?

TORRENCE.

I'm going. (*Crosses right.*)

STEWART *enters from his office and stands watching them.*

EVA LOU.

Is it Conkling? (*TORRENCE goes right to door of Contractor's office, with her hand over her mouth.*)
Is it Cosgrove?

(*TORRENCE exits, right, closing the door.*)

STEWART.

Toothache?

EVA LOU.

No; a secret.

STEWART.

Same thing. She won't rest easy till it's out. (*Comes down to desk and puts a paper in the drawer.*) A secret is hard to keep in this hot weather.

EVA LOU.

You look all worn out. The work has been too much for you.

STEWART.

I'll go to sleep to-morrow, and I won't wake up for a week.

EVA LOU.

You mustn't miss the dedication. We're going to be awfully gay. Have you heard the program?

STEWART.

No.

EVA LOU.

Well, since you insist upon my taking a chair, I will.

STEWART.

Excuse me; be seated. (*Places a chair.*)

EVA LOU.

Thank you. Well, to begin with, there is an address of welcome to be delivered by father. Then the band will play. Then the governor will press the button. I'll telegraph the signal to the gateman. He'll open the gate, and the water will do the rest.

STEWART.

Do you understand telegraphy?

EVA LOU.

No, but Bolton has been teaching me to make the signal "O. K." That's all that is necessary.

STEWART.

I suppose you will be going abroad shortly.

EVA LOU.

I? Why so?

STEWART.

Someone said that you were going to be married.

EVA LOU.

I hadn't heard of it.

STEWART.

Miss Lane, I would like to get your opinion on matrimony.

EVA LOU.

I am not really qualified to advise. If you want reliable and accurate information, you should ask Aunt Jule. She has been married three times.

STEWART.

I don't want expert opinion. I want your personal point of view.

EVA LOU.

(Smoothing out her glove.)

Well, if conditions were right—the right man, the right girl—and if he loved her—

STEWART.

Yes?

EVA LOU.

And she loved him—

STEWART.

Yes?

EVA LOU.

I think that it would be very nice.

STEWART.

“The right man.” That brings on more talk. How does one find out that he is the right man?

EVA LOU.

By asking the person that is most likely to know, I suppose.

STEWART.

The girl?

EVA LOU.

Yes.

STEWART.

Miss Lane, let me tell you of a case in point; a purely hypothetical case, understand?

EVA LOU.

Yes.

STEWART.

A comparatively young man with good health and the average amount of brains, but with no money to speak of—a professional man—let us say an engineer—

EVA LOU.

Like yourself.

STEWART.

Yes. Meets a girl—a nice girl—a very nice girl—

EVA LOU.

Like me.

STEWART.

Yes, remarkably like you. This girl has beauty, with money and social position. The man falls in love with the girl. Now, the problem is this. Should the man, knowing the vast difference between their estates, social and financial, declare his love and ask the girl to marry him?

EVA LOU.

Is the young man sure he loves the girl?

STEWART.

Oh, reasonably sure; reasonably sure. He thinks about her all the time he's awake, and dreams about

her all the time he's asleep. The stars are brighter and the air is sweeter, the breeze softer when she is by his side. (*Rising and going toward her.*) He would hold an eternity of joy well lost, could he but press her to his heart, gaze deep into the sapphire seas of her eyes, crush the crimson coral of her lips in one long—

EVA LOU.

(*Rises hastily.*)

I—I think we may take it for granted that he loves her.

STEWART.

(*After a pause.*)

Yes. I think we may safely take that for granted.

EVA LOU.

Well, I should advise this young man to have the courage of his convictions and tell the girl how he feels about it.

STEWART.

Suppose he did, and you were the girl, what would you say to him?

EVA LOU.

I don't exactly know.

STEWART.

Well, what do you think?

EVA LOU.

I think I had better be going. (*Starts toward left.*)

STEWART.

(*Crossing and taking her arm.*)

No, you don't. I'll probably never have the courage to get this far again. Eva Lou, I am the man; you are the girl. You must answer.

EVA LOU.
(*Haughtily.*)

Must?

STEWART.
(*Firmly.*)

Must!

EVA LOU.
(*Smiling.*)

Oh, well, I suppose if I must, it will have to be "yes."

(STEWART stoops to kiss her, but she lowers her head and her big hat covers her face.)

BOLTON enters from Engineer's office.

BOLTON.

Beg pardon—

(EVA LOU and STEWART separate.)

STEWART.
Well, what is it, Bolton?

BOLTON.
I just wished to see if you were awake.

STEWART.
Yes, I am awake, Bolton.

(BOLTON bows and exits, grinning, returning to Engineer's office.)

EVA LOU.
I'm sure he saw you.

STEWART.
Sure, he saw me. He saw me gazing intently at the top of your hat.

EVA LOU.
But, Tom dear, he—

STEWART.

(*Frowns.*)

"Tom?" (*Slowly.*) Say, when did you first begin to love me?

EVA LOU.

Oh, ages and ages ago.

STEWART.

I know, dear. But can't you be a little more definite? (*Looks troubled.*)

EVA LOU.

Oh, what difference does it make?

STEWART.

It makes a h— It makes a lot of difference.

EVA LOU.

The first time I really liked you was the night I asked you if you wouldn't buckle down to work and help dad.

STEWART.

(*Relieved.*)

I'm mighty glad to hear that. Eva Lou, there is something else I ought to tell you. Something about my past—

EVA LOU.

I don't want to hear anything about your past. I know you were rather wild, and there was a time when I actually hated and despised you. You are different now, and we will let the dead past bury its dead.

STEWART.

But suppose I had committed a crime?

EVA LOU.

You haven't murdered anyone, have you?

STEWART.

No. Not yet.

EVA LOU.

Well, then let's not talk about it.

STEWART.

All right. Now are you going to let me kiss you?

EVA LOU.

Kiss me? The very idea! What for?

STEWART.

Well—it's customary, you know, when people become engaged.

EVA LOU.

(*Yielding.*)

If it's customary, of course—(STEWART *again tries to kiss her, but the hat is in the way.*) That silly old hat is awfully in the way, isn't it?

STEWART.

Awfully.

EVA LOU.

Wait. (*Takes off hat, pins it on STEWART'S arm, and they kiss.*)

(*As they stand with their arms about each other, their position is such that his face is hidden and they do not observe when*)—

LANE enters from his office at the left, and stands in stupefaction. After a pause he takes out his watch as if timing STEWART. After further pause, he goes down stage and places his hat on the table. He sits at the left of the table; crosses his legs and continues to look at his watch. After further pause, STEWART looks up and sees LANE. His face shows horrified surprise.

LANE.

(*After a pause, closes his watch and looks up.*)

Twenty seconds flat, young man.

EVA LOU.

(*Turns, startled.*)

Father! (*Breaks away and rushes up to the window, where she stands looking out and arranging her hair.*)

LANE.

I thought I'd wait around. I knew you'd have to come up for air. (*Rising.*) Well, young man, what does this mean?

STEWART.

(*Confused.*)

Why, ah—Why, ah—Why, ah—

LANE.

(*Mimicing.*)

"Why ah—Why, ah—Why, ah." Your conversation sounds like a phonograph record with a crack in it. Can't you answer my question?

STEWART.

(*Confused.*)

What is it you want to know?

LANE.

I want to know what it was you were doing?

STEWART.

You had a good look at us. What do you think I was doing?

LANE.

From where I sat it looked like you were kissing my daughter.

STEWART.

(*Smiling.*)

Let us proceed on that assumption.

LANE.

(*Loudly.*)

We will. Young fellow, I—

EVA LOU.

(Coming down stage.)

Now, dad, don't say anything stupid.

LANE.

That will be about all from you. I'll attend to you later.

(EVA LOU goes back up stage.)

STEWART.

The fact of the matter is, I love Eva, and she loves me—

LANE.

(Interrupting.)

Well, it looks like an even break so far. Go on.

STEWART.

I know I don't amount to anything, but—

LANE.

Oh, I don't know. With practice you might make a pretty good hat-rack.

EVA LOU.

(Coming down stage quickly.)

Oh, give me that ridiculous thing. *(Takes hat off STEWART's arm.)* Father, why do you make it so hard for Tom to say what he wants to say? You know he has a retiring disposition, and—

LANE.

Retiring disposition? Who? Him? Sure he has. He's a regular shrinking violet in the dell.

EVA LOU.

(Angrily.)

Will you please let him speak?

LANE.

Who's stopping him? Let him speak. If he's got

anything to say, let him say it. Get down to tacks. Talk business.

STEWART.

(*Determined.*)

I will talk business. (*Puts his arms about EVA Lou.*) Eva and I as a committee of two have gone into executive session and decided to form a joint stock company, to be incorporated under the name of "Mutual Love and Benefit Society," strictly limited. Do you follow me?

LANE.

Perfectly.

STEWART.

What do you say?

LANE.

As this is a business proposition, and as I will probably be expected to subscribe, you will have no objection to my looking into your commercial standing. I don't suppose I'll find you rated in Bradstreet or Dun?

STEWART.

Hardly. Fortunately, however, I have a list of my assets here. Bolton made it out to-day. (*Hands paper to LANE.*)

LANE.

(*Takes paper, puts on his glasses and reads.*)

"Due"—Huh. "Drawn"—Huh. "Balance due, five hundred fifty dollars." Is that everything you own?

STEWART.

Well, not exactly everything.

LANE.

No?

STEWART.

I have another suit besides this one—and a watch—and a pair of gold cuff links.

LANE.

Stop. It's too much. (*Puts his hand to his head and goes left and sits down.*) Five hundred and fifty dollars. Browne, there is one thing you have that you forgot to mention.

STEWART.

What's that?

LANE.

You've got your nerve. Don't overlook that. With your nerve and my daughter, you ought to do well—pretty well—

STEWART.

Yes. That's what we thought.

EVA LOU.

Are you going to give us your blessing, dad?

LANE.

(*Rising.*)

Yes, Eva. (*Goes to her and smooths her hair.*) And I hope you and this young man will be as happy as your mother and I were. (*To STEWART.*) I like you, Browne. I think that you are on the level. You were a pretty rotten proposition when you first came here, but I believe you're a changed man.

STEWART.

I am.

LANE.

As for money, that never cut much of a figure with me. But I'm free to say I wouldn't be in your boots for a barrel of gilt-edge bonds when Aunt Jule hears about this.

STEWART.

Think she'll give me a run for my money?

LANE.

Just wait.

EVA LOU.

We had an idea—that is, I had an idea—that maybe you would tell her, dad.

LANE.

Huh. I've got six ideas, all better than that.

EVA LOU.

Ah, please, father.

LANE.

No; not for a million dollars.

EVA LOU.

But you'll be on our side. You'll help, won't you?

LANE.

Yes, I'll help. She's in there now. Tell you what, Browne, we'll tackle her together. You go in and tell her, and I'll stay out here and pray. (*Laughs.*) Well, when it's all said and done, it's our affair. If Eva marries you, she'll have to put up with you, and I'll have to put up for you. So it's none of her business.

EVA LOU.

I know what we'll do. We'll announce the engagement without saying anything to her. Then she can't break it off without causing talk, and I know she won't risk a scandal.

LANE.

I believe you've hit the right idea, Eva.

STEWART.

You have to give dinners or something when you announce an engagement.

LANE.

Dinner, nothing. You go around and meet folks and just announce it. Tell 'em—

LANNON and TORRENCE enter from Contractor's office at right.

LANE.

Now's as good a time to start as any. Lannon, you and your girl are just in time. You know we were talking about Browne getting married. Well, I've a surprise for you. No use keeping it a secret. It's one of my prerogatives—

TORRENCE.

(Crossing quickly to STEWART.)

Oh, Tom! How could you?

EVA LOU.

(Startled.)

"Tom?"

LANE.

(Trying to continue.)

Prerogatives—

TORRENCE.

And you promised you wouldn't tell till I gave you permission.

STEWART.

(Startled.)

Huh?

TORRENCE.

(Aggrieved.)

I haven't told father, yet; and then to have this man bawl it out from the housetops.

LANE.

Prerog—Say, what's going on here?

TORRENCE.

Mr. Lane, since half the world apparently knows what I thought was a secret, I would prefer to tell father myself. Daddy, I'm sorry and I hope you

will forgive me. This is my husband. (*Takes STEWART's arm.*)

(*The following four exclamations are all given at one time.*)

LANE.

What's that?

LANNON.

Torrence!

STEWART.

Huh?

EVA LOU.

Her husband? (*Shrinks away.*)

TORRENCE.

Yes, father. Six weeks ago to-day we were married.

ALL.

Married!

AUNT JULE *bounds in from Company office at left.*

AUNT JULE.

Married? Who's married?

LANE.

Why, the girl is out of her head.

LANNON.

Is this the truth?

TORRENCE.

Yes, dad. We met in Kansas City and were married three days before I went abroad.

EVA LOU.

It's a monstrous lie!

LANE.

I tell you, the girl is crazy!

LANNON.

See here, Lane. That makes twice you have said that. Of course, the fact that she has married this

man shows that she is weak mentally, but there is no occasion to rub it in.

LANE.

But it is impossible that she can be married to Browne!

LANNON.

Why impossible?

LANE.

Because—confound it, sir—Browne has just proposed marriage to my daughter.

LANNON.

Your daughter?

LANE.

Certainly, my daughter.

EVA LOU.

And what is more, he has been accepted. And I must say, Torrence, if this is a practical joke you are carrying it too far.

TORRENCE.

(Indignantly.)

I am married to him, and it is no joke. Why, I told you about it not fifteen minutes ago.

EVA LOU.

You said you were married, but you didn't say to whom.

TORRENCE.

I said you knew the man.

LANNON.

I guess she didn't know him as well then as she does now.

EVA LOU.

It can't be true! I won't believe it! And if it isn't, I'll never forgive you! And I'll never forgive you if it is, either! *(Turns to STEWART.)*

LANE.

Don't let us have any more arguments. One thing is reasonably sure. If this woman—(*Indicating TORRENCE.*)

TORRENCE.

(*Icily.*)

Refer to me as Mrs. Browne, please.

LANE.

Well, then, if Mrs. Browne is married to Mr. Browne, Mr. Browne probably knows about it. (*To STEWART.*) Speak up! Don't stand there giving your justly-celebrated imitation of an oyster. You've got your mouth open. Say something!

STEWART.

(*Acts embarrassed and clears his throat.*)

Ahem!

LANE.

Well, we're waiting. Have you nothing to say?

STEWART.

Nothing I can think of just now, unless some one—er—will introduce me to my wife.

TORRENCE.

Don't joke, dear. Tell them the truth. This is very embarrassing for me.

STEWART.

(*Grimly.*)

Yes, I know. It's very embarrassing for me, too.

LANE.

You had better think of something to say, young fellow. This thing is up to you to explain.

STEWART.

(*To TORRENCE.*)

If you please (*gently removes her hand from his*

arm), if I have to explain this, I expect I will need both my arms. (*Addressing all.*) Circumstances would seem to have conspired—er—rather—combined—to prove that I am more or less—er—married. However, I think that I can elucidate—er—rather—explain the matter satisfactorily. The whole thing in a knot-shell—er—rather—nut-hole—Hang it, I mean—

LANE.

(*Interrupting.*)

“Knot-hole.” Great salt mackerel! “Knot-hole” is what you are trying to say.

STEWART.

(*With dignity.*)

Pardon me, Mr. Lane. “Nut-shell” is what I was trying to say. The whole thing in a nut-shell is mistaken identity.

TORRENCE.

(*Amazed.*)

Tom!

STEWART.

The young lady is partly right in what she says. When she calls herself Mrs. Browne, she is entirely right, she having changed her name when she married.

(EVA LOU covers her face with her hands and turns away.)

LANE.

(*Ominously.*)

Browne, if you have—

STEWART.

(*Holding up his hand.*)

But, when she refers to me as Browne, she is wrong.

LANNON.

(*Sarcastically.*)

You having changed your name when you married.

STEWART.

No; before I married. That is, before it is said that I married. There are several grave reasons why I cannot be more explicit in regard—er—this matter.

LANE.

Lannon, in business circles you have the reputation of being a cool, clear-headed man.

LANNON.

(*Curtly.*)

Thanks.

LANE.

I ask you, man to man, can you make head or tail out of what that idiot is saying?

LANNON.

I cannot.

TORRENCE.

You have confused the poor boy. He doesn't know what he is saying. What's it all about, anyway? Goodness gracious, don't you suppose I know whether we were married or not? I tell you again, we are married, and we love each other devotedly. Why, just a little while ago, in this very room Eva Lou nearly caught us kissing and hugging each other. Didn't she Tom?

STEWART.

Huh?

EVA LOU.

(*Crossing and taking STEWART's arm.*)

Is this true?

STEWART.

(*Confused.*)

Well—in a way.

EVA LOU.

Is it true? (*She shakes his arm. TORRENCE pulls slightly at his other arm. This business must not be exaggerated.*)

STEWART.

She kissed—that is—there were some kisses exchanged. Not many—three, to be exact.

EVA LOU.

Then it is true. You are married. Oh, the shame of it! (*Crosses left.*)

LANE.

Browne, you scoundrel, do you mean to say you kissed this girl?

LANNON.

Hold on, Lane. I don't like the attitude you are taking. There is no law, legal or ethical, that prohibits husband and wife kissing if they feel like it. It is done by some of our best people.

LANE.

But you don't understand. Not ten minutes ago he was kissing my daughter!

EVA LOU.

Father!

LANNON.

(*Amazed.*)

Your daughter?

LANE.

Certainly, my daughter.

AUNT JULE.

(*Coming center and shoving LANE and STEWART aside.*)

I've heard enough of this. What's the matter with all of you? Have you lost your reason? Can't you see this man is not married?

LANE.

(*Crossly.*)

You keep out of it. What do you know about it, anyway?

AUNT JULE.

I don't know anything, but I have good common-sense. Do you suppose I married and buried three husbands without being able to tell a married man when I see one?

TORRENCE.

(*Cuttingly.*)

Really, Mrs. Lane-Turner, although I can't boast of having your vast experience in dealing with husbands wholesale, I trust you will permit me to know my o w n husband when I see him.

AUNT JULE.

Huh! What you need is a good spanking. (*Turning to EVA LOU.*) And you, Lou Lane, I've a good mind to shake you. Haven't you any spunk about you? Don't you see this woman is trying to steal your man?

EVA LOU.

What do you expect me to do? Fight?

AUNT JULE.

You'd better fight. For if you lose him, you'll lose the only man you ever knew who was worth the snap of my finger!

LANE.

(*Aghast.*)

Well, I'll be hanged! (*Sinks in chair left of table and holds his head.*)

EVA LOU.

If she has any claim on him, she can have him.

AUNT JULE.

Claim? Don't you see that Phil Lannon and his

girl are scheming to get the only eligible man in town away from you?

LANNON.

(*Coming center, furiously.*)

Mrs. Turner, if you were a man I'd knock you down.

AUNT JULE.

Mr. Lannon, if I were a man you couldn't do it. And hang me if I think you can do it at that.

LANE.

(*Rising and coming down between LANNON and*

AUNT JULE.)

Here, here. We'll never arrive anywhere by these roughhouse methods. Let us observe parliamentary rules. The young lady in the green dress claims she is married to the young gentleman, who is now giving a correct impersonation of a startled fawn. One word from him will settle the whole matter. Let us hear from you Browne, pro or con. But let me warn you in advance, we have had about all the con we are going to stand for.

BOLTON *enters from Engineer's office.*

STEWART.

I tried to explain, but you wouldn't understand. I am an imposter. My name is not—

BOLTON.

(*Imperatively.*)

Mr. Browne. (*Crosses to center.*)

STEWART.

(*Turning.*)

Oh, there's Bolton. He will explain. Bolton attends to all minor details not directly connected with the works.

LANE.

This is one detail Bolton will not attend to. It's up to you. If you're a man, speak up. If you're a sneaking, white-livered hyena, say so and we'll all go home.

STEWART.

(*Angrily.*)

I will speak out. You people are trying to put me in dutch with the only girl I ever loved—and I'm not going to keep still any longer.

BOLTON.

(*With respectful insistence.*)

Mr. Browne, I beg of you to keep the matter quiet for at least twenty-four hours.

STEWART.

Twenty-four hours, nothing! Did you hear this woman come hopping in here? Grabs me and calls me "husband." This thing is going to be cleared up right now, or the first thing I know someone will come hopping in and call me "father."

BOLTON.

Think what it will mean, sir. Think of his mother.

STEWART.

I tell you, I've stood all I'm going to stand.

BOLTON.

Don't do anything, sir. Think of your own mother. (STEWART *is about to speak, and then turns away.*)

LANE.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Yes, Browne, think of your mother. Then think of your grandmother. Come, Lou, let's go home. Mr.

Browne has a long line of female relatives to be thought of. Besides, it's lunch time. (*Goes to center door.*)

EVA LOU.

Just a moment. Allow me to congratulate you, Mrs. Browne. And if he has any more wives, allow me to congratulate them, too.

TORRENCE.

(*In a rage.*)

If you ever dare speak to me again, or look as if you are going to, I'll have you put in jail! (EVA LOU and AUNT JULE go out center and right.)

LANE.

Yes. And Mrs. Browne, if you don't want to lose your husband, you had better put his name on his collar. (*Strides out center and right.*)

(BOLTON crosses quietly to STEWART's office up right, where he stands by the door until curtain. LANNON crosses between STEWART and TORRENCE to the door of his own office down right, turns, looks at STEWART and TORRENCE and shakes his head.)

LANNON.

(*Exclaims disgustedly.*)

Aw! (*Exits angrily into his office.*)

TORRENCE.

(*Thinking that they are alone, turns and goes center to STEWART.*)

Alone, at last. Kiss me, Tom. (*Tries to put her arms around STEWART's neck.*)

STEWART.

(*Quietly restraining her and gently pushing her away, with a movement of his head that calls her attention to BOLTON's presence.*)

Bolton attends to all minor details not directly connected with the works.

(TORRENCE *turns and sees* BOLTON, *who is standing rigidly at attention and staring straight ahead, for—*)

CURTAIN.

PUTTING IT OVER

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE: *Same as the Second Act, the following morning. The walls are hung with flags and bunting. On the table at the right a telegraph key and sounder have been rigged up, with an installation that is obviously temporary. An electric buzzer is attached to the rear wall.*

When the curtain rises BOLTON is sitting at the table, adjusting the telegraph equipment. A brass band is heard playing off stage. Just as the selection is about to stop, TORRENCE passes by the window outside, from the right, enters through the center door and comes down to the table, reaching there just as the music stops.

TORRENCE.

Good morning, Bolton. I have just returned from Kansas City, from the hospital.

BOLTON.

Has he recovered?

TORRENCE.

Almost entirely. Bolton, why, oh, why, did you not rescue me from that humiliating situation yesterday?

BOLTON.

There were reasons, Miss—Madam—

TORRENCE.

I'll never be able to look that man in the face. What's his name, anyway?

BOLTON.

Stewart.

TORRENCE.

Another thing, Bolton. Do you suppose this Mr. Stewart has had the effrontry to read the letters I wrote to Tom?

BOLTON.

No. They are here. (*Opens table drawer and takes out a bundle of pink letters.*) Mr. Stewart opens all business letters addressed to Mr. Browne, but these were carefully put away, unopened.

TORRENCE.

How could he tell they were not business letters?

BOLTON.

They are pink, and perfumed, and postmarked "Paris."

TORRENCE.

I see. Bolton, have you seen father this morning? He said he would call for me at eleven-thirty.

BOLTON.

It is about that time now.

TORRENCE.

(*At window.*)

I'll wait in the office. I could never find him in that crowd. (*Goes to door of Contractor's office.*) If you see Mrs. Ring, tell her I am waiting for her. (*BOLTON bows. She comes back and extends her hand.*) Tom and I both thank you for your loyalty, Bolton.

BOLTON.

Thank you, Mrs. Browne. I hope that you and your husband will be very happy.

TORRENCE.

I know we will. (*Goes into Contractor's office, right.*)

(BOLTON closes switch of telegraph key.)

EVA LOU, AUNT JULE and LANE enter from back right through the center door. All are festively dressed. EVA LOU is carrying a large bouquet of roses. LANE is suffering from the heat. BOLTON bows and exits into Engineer's office.

EVA LOU.

(Comes down to table and throws her flowers on the table viciously.)

How much longer before this fool thing will be over?

AUNT JULE.

(*Soothingly.*)

Only about half an hour now, dear.

LANE.

(*Up center.*)

"Fool thing?" You arranged the program yourself.

AUNT JULE.

(*To LANE.*)

Hush.

EVA LOU.

I didn't know it would be so deadly.

LANE.

It's the heat.

EVA LOU.

It isn't the heat. It's the whole thing. It's silly, foolish, idiotic, insane, maddening!

AUNT JULE.

(*Crosses to EVA LOU.*)

There, there, dear. You must try to be calm.

You'll have hysterics. Better go into your father's office. It's cool and quiet there. Take off your shoes and lie down on the couch. I'll call you in time to give the signal.

EVA LOU.

Oh fiddle! My heart is breaking and you talk about taking off my shoes.

LANE.

What's the matter with you, anyway? Half an hour ago you were riding along in the governor's carriage, bowing and smiling like a lovely Queen of the May. Now look at you.

EVA LOU.

(Goes to the table and sits with her elbows on the table, chin on hands and face to the audience.)

Yes, I was riding along in the governor's carriage. I was bowing and smiling. And all the time the devilish band was trailing along behind me, and playing "Where is Browne?" *(Lays her arms on the table and buries her face in her arms.)*

LANE.

(After an outburst of hearty laughter.)

Gad! I didn't get that one. *(To AUNT JULE.)* Say, a man misses a lot by not having a musical education, doesn't he?

AUNT JULE.

Dave Lane, I'm ashamed of you. How you can sit there and laugh, when you know your daughter is breaking her heart about that man, is more than I can understand.

LANE.

Hang it all, Jule, I'm as sorry about that as you are. But you don't suppose I'm going through the

rest of my life without laughing? Do you expect me to join the monks and live in a monastery?

AUNT JULE.

You probably mean a monastery.

LANE.

You women seem to think that I'm to blame because this Browne fellow has the wife habit.

EVA LOU.

Oh! (*Rises and crosses to left, her teeth and hands clinched.*)

AUNT JULE.

Will you hush?

LANE.

The more I think about that scoundrel's actions, the madder I get. I tell you, he's a bad egg. It's lucky we found him out in time, the young black-guard!

EVA LOU.

(*Crosses center to LANE; speaks hotly.*)

How dare you! How dare you sit there and say things you know aren't true? He isn't a black-guard. He isn't a bad egg. He isn't any of the things you said. He isn't, I tell you. He's good! He's fine! He's noble! He's lovely!

LANE.

"Lovely?"

EVA LOU.

Oh, it's shameful of you to say such things about him when he isn't here to defend himself. You're all against him. It's a plot. You're all helping that woman steal him away from me. You can separate us, but you can't keep me from loving him. I do love him. I don't care if he has a wife, I love him.

I don't care if he has forty wives, a hundred thousand and a million, billion wives, I love him. Do you hear me? I love him! I love him! Love him! Love him! (*Stamps her foot each time, and then crosses down left, crying.*)

LANE.

(*Aghast.*)

There's a temper for you.

AUNT JULE.

You see? She takes after her father.

LANE.

Yes, and you'll see her father take after her in a minute, if she keeps this up.

STEWART *enters from back right and center. He is carefully dressed, but is carrying a bucket full of sand, and a small trowel.*

LANE.

Here's the lovely man, now. Well, what do you want?

STEWART.

I want a few minutes of your earnest consideration.

LANE.

I don't care to talk to you.

STEWART.

The matter is urgent—vital—

LANE.

I repeat—

STEWART.

(*Places pail on table.*)

I insist that you put aside personalities. What I have to say is of the utmost importance.

LANE.

Very well. Go ahead.

(EVA LOU crosses to left door as if about to exit.)

STEWART.

(Crosses quickly to EVA LOU.)

Miss Lane, I wish you would remain. I—

EVA LOU.

(Haughtily.)

Sir!

STEWART.

(Makes a gesture of resignation, and returns to the table.)

Colonel, take a look at that stuff. (Points to table.)

LANE.

(Goes to table and lifts up sand on trowel.)

Huh? What's the important matter? Mud pies? What's this stuff, anyway?

STEWART.

It's supposed to be high grade Portland cement.

LANE.

Supposed to be? What is it?

STEWART.

I don't know. It isn't marl, at any rate. There is about sixty thousand cubic yards of that stuff used in the dam, and it is absolutely worthless.

LANE.

"Worthless?" What do you mean? Explain yourself.

STEWART.

This material has most of the cement properties. After it dries out it hardens. But when it is exposed to water again, it dissolves—melts away.

LANE.

In plain, two-legged words, what are you trying to tell me?

STEWART.

I am trying to tell you that the dam is not stable. It's rotten, and it will break down under a minimum head.

LANE.

(*Striking table.*)

I don't believe it!

STEWART.

(*Seriously.*)

It's so, just the same.

LANE.

Then who is responsible for this condition of things? You were supposed to pass on all material.

STEWART.

I never personally inspected one ounce of cement.

LANE.

But Lannon has the vouchers, signed with your initials.

STEWART.

I know he has.

LANE.

Then, sir, you are a criminal; a plain crook.

STEWART.

We will discuss that phase of the question later.

LANE.

How do you know this stuff was used?

STEWART.

MacIntosh found a half-barrel of it covered up in a shed where the cement was formerly stored.

LANE.

Could you stand before a court of inquiry and swear that this grade of cement was used?

STEWART.

No; of course not. LANE.

That's what I thought. You have discovered a mare's nest.

STEWART.
(*Urgently.*)

I insist that you postpone the opening of the water gates till we have had time to look into the matter.

LANE.

Nonsense. We can't alter the program at this late hour. How are you going to prove your theory, anyway?

STEWART.

There is only one way to prove it; tear down the superstructure.

LANE.

What? Tear down the— (*Sits.*) Do you suppose I would be a party to such insanity? We'd be the joke of the century. We'd be known throughout the ages as the men who built a dam, then tore it down again to see if it was strong enough.

STEWART.

We won't make that an issue. But I am going on record, here and now, as protesting against the gates being opened to-day. LANE.

All right. That lets you out. Your skirts are clear. But the gates will be opened as scheduled, just the same.

STEWART.
(*Impressively.*)

There are thousands of people out there, now; hundreds of them actually on the dam. Whoever releases the water is guilty of manslaughter; no, plain murder. Colonel, those gates will not be opened.

LANE.

The hell they won't. I'm boss here, and I'm too old to be frightened by bogies.

STEWART.

If you turn the water on, the dam is doomed.

LANE.

(Out of temper.)

Then let the dam be doomed.

STEWART.

You will regret it.

LANE.

I say, let the dam be doomed!

AUNT JULE.

(Coming center.)

Dave Lane, you must be crazy. This young man tells you hundreds of people are in danger of their lives, and all you can do is stand there and yell, "let the doom be damned!"

EVA LOU.

Mr. Browne, if what you say is true, there must be some way of proving it without tearing down the dam. Someone must know about the cement.

STEWART.

Of course. Lannon knows. He ought to. He's cleared about a hundred thousand dollars on the transaction.

LANE.

You'd better not let Lannon hear you say that. He'd institute an action for libel and take your five hundred and fifty dollars away from you.

EVA LOU.

Couldn't he be made to confess?

STEWART.

I don't see how. We can hardly give him the third degree. Anyway, nothing but red-hot pinchers would make him give himself away.

EVA LOU.

There must be some way to reach him.

TORRENCE *enters from Contractor's office.*

TORRENCE.

I beg your pardon. I thought perhaps my father was here. You haven't seen him?

STEWART.

No, Miss—Mrs. I haven't seen him.

TORRENCE.

It's very odd. He promised to call for Mrs. Ring and me at half-past eleven. Mrs. Ring has not arrived, either. (*Exits into Contractor's office.*)

STEWART.

(*After a pause.*)

There's the answer to your question. There is the one and only way to reach Lannon.

EVA LOU.

You mean—?

STEWART.

Through his daughter. (*After a pause.*) The Ring ranch is in the gorge below the dam, isn't it?

AUNT JULE.

Yes, it's about a mile below Cinnamon Butte.

STEWART.

Colonel Lane, if you actually heard Lannon confess that he had substituted a low grade of cement in the construction of the dam, what action would you take?

LANE.

I'd postpone the opening, of course, and start an investigation. I'm not as bull-headed as you people seem to think I am.

STEWART.

Miss Lane, if it would save your father from financial ruin, could you tell a bare-faced lie plausibly, and stick to it?

EVA LOU.

If it is for father, I will do my best.

STEWART.

Very well. (*Calling.*) Bolton.

BOLTON *enters from Engineer's office.*

STEWART.

Find Mr. Lannon. Tell him he is wanted here immediately.

(BOLTON *nods and exits center door and right.*)

STEWART.

Are you with me on this, Mrs. Turner?

AUNT JULE.

Of course I am.

STEWART.

Then go into Lannon's office and keep his daughter from entering this room within the next ten minutes.

AUNT JULE.

How can I prevent her?

STEWART.

Engage her in conversation. Talk about something interesting.

EVA LOU.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Yes. Talk about Mr. Browne. That will be interesting to her.

AUNT JULE.

(*Emphatically.*)

If talking will keep her (*crosses to right*) she's kept. (*Exits into Contractor's office.*)

LANE.

Now, young fellow, I've had enough of this mystery.

STEWART.

All I ask is ten minutes. If I don't prove my point in ~~that~~ time, I will make no further objection to the opening of the gates.

LANE.

All right; ten minutes. (*Looks at his watch and crosses left.*)

STEWART.

I'll join you in your office, colonel.

(*LANE goes into his office at left.*)

EVA LOU.

Tell me what I am to do.

STEWART.

Very well. The stage is set. This is the scenario. Lannon will come here. You must prevent him from entering his office. Don't let him see his daughter. Tell him she has gone to see Mrs. Ring, and that she is on the trail below the dam. Tell him you are just about to give the signal to the gateman. If he thinks the dam is sound, no harm is done. If he has reason to believe the dam is not sound, he'll try to prevent your sending the signal. We will be in your father's office. The door will be open. Do you understand?

EVA LOU.

Perfectly. (*Nervously.*) It is rather horrible, isn't it? The rest of my life I will probably feel as Judas must have felt.

STEWART.

The lives of many people may depend on your action. Besides, there is the money involved.

EVA LOU.

Of course we must consider the thirty pieces of silver.

BOLTON *enters from back right through center door.*

BOLTON.

Mr. Lannon is coming.

(EVA LOU *crosses to the window.*)

STEWART.

Bolton, for the next half hour you are to take your orders from Miss Lane. Do you understand?

BOLTON.

Yes. (*Exits right into Engineer's office.*)

EVA LOU.

Hurry!

STEWART.

I'm going. It's up to you. (*Exits left into Company's office.*)

(EVA LOU *crosses down left.*)

LANNON *enters from back right, through center door.*

LANNON.

Good morning, Miss Lane.

EVA LOU.

Good morning, Mr. Lannon. (LANNON *crosses toward his office door.*) Mr. Lannon, I—I—

LANNON.

(*Turning.*)

Yes?

EVA LOU.

(Coming center.)

You haven't seen my flowers. Aren't they beautiful?

LANNON.

(Coming center.)

They are beautiful.

EVA LOU.

The governor presented them to me. Wasn't that nice of him? And don't you think him a good governor?

LANNON.

Yes, indeed; first class. Ought to be. Cost me enough. If the newspapers are to be believed. *(Turns toward his door.)*

EVA LOU.

Oh, but they are not to be believed. They are always saying you are a very bad man, and I am sure you are not.

LANNON.

(Returning.)

Very few men are altogether bad, and no man is altogether good. One's virtues and vices seem to run in streaks, like fat and lean in a side of bacon.

EVA LOU.

What time is it, please?

LANNON.

(Looking at his watch.)

Two minutes to twelve.

EVA LOU.

Just two minutes. *(Goes to table.)* I must be ready. You know I am to telegraph the signal for the opening of the gates. Isn't that an honor?

LANNON.

It will be something to tell your grandchildren.

EVA LOU.

I hope there won't be an accident.

LANNON.

Accident?

EVA LOU.

Nothing wrong with the dam.

LANNON.

What could be wrong with the dam?

EVA LOU.

Nothing, of course, with two such men as you and Mr. Browne to vouch for it. It must be a very marvel of stability.

LANNON.

I am afraid Mr. Browne will have to be the sole sponsor. My responsibility ended when the material was delivered and O. K'd.

EVA LOU.

It is foolish, of course, but I have an uneasy feeling, Mr. Lannon. Are you superstitious?

LANNON.

Of course. All people are, more or less.

EVA LOU.

Then you believe in dreams?

LANNON.

Perhaps.

EVA LOU.

I had a terrible dream last night, and I have been nervous and depressed all morning on account of it.

LANNON.

What was it?

EVA LOU.

I dreamed I saw the body of a drowned woman floating in the river. A sodden, clammy thing, with staring eyes. Dark, matted hair, and a face livid and swollen—distorted, hideous—it came drifting, drifting along; at times, almost submerged; whirling and bobbing in every chance eddy; making stiff, uncouth gestures, as the current swayed it this way and that. Then I dreamed you came and stood on the bank opposite me, and held out your arms to the drowned girl. Then a horrible thing happened. The dead eyes turned reproachfully toward you. A dead hand pointed accusingly at you. The dead lips parted, and I heard a voice wailing, "Father! Father! You have killed me!" Then at last I knew it was Torrence.

LANNON.

(Wiping his forehead with his handkerchief.)

My God!

(Band plays off stage. NOTE: Use phonograph, with lively march tune. Let the record play all the way through.)

EVA LOU.

(Jumping up and running to the window.)

There is the band. The dedication is over. Now for the signal. I am as excited as I was when I tried on my first long dress.

LANNON.

(Uneasily.)

Torrence was to have waited here for me. I wonder where she can be. *(Goes toward his office door at right.)*

EVA LOU.

(Coming back to center.)

Why, didn't you know? She was here, but she started out to meet Mrs. Ring.

LANNON.

Started to meet her?

EVA LOU.

Yes, she took the Double-O trail.

LANNON.

(Stunned.)

Torrence in the gorge? Do you know what you are saying?

EVA LOU.

(Innocently.)

Why, yes. Perhaps you can still see her. *(Goes to the window.)* No, I guess she must have passed Cinnamon Butte.

LANNON.

(At window.)

She is a mile down the gorge.

(Buzzer on wall sounds. EVA LOU runs to the table and puts her hand on the telegraph key.)

LANNON.

(Turning.)

Don't touch that key! *(EVA LOU looks over her shoulder in apparent surprise. Her hand is still on the key.)* Don't touch that key! *(Takes EVA LOU by her shoulder and throws her toward left.)*

EVA LOU.

Mr. Lannon! How dare you!

LANNON.

You must not give that signal. It is a matter of life and death!

EVA LOU.

Whose life?

LANNON.

My girl's life.

EVA LOU.

Torrence? Ridiculous!

LANNON.

She's in the gorge. If anything should happen to the dam she would never escape.

EVA LOU.

What could happen to the dam? Stand aside, please.

LANNON.

No.

EVA LOU.

You understand, of course, that the signal is merely a matter of form; a courtesy to me. The man will open the gates, whether he gets a signal or not.

LANNON.

(*Crossing to EVA LOU.*)

Are you lying?

EVA LOU.

This is outrageous! You will have to—

LANNON.

(*In a frenzy.*)

Where's Bolton? (*Calling.*) Bolton! Bolton!
(*Rushes toward Engineer's office, right.*)

BOLTON *enters from Engineer's office, confronting*
LANNON.

BOLTON.

Did you call?

LANNON.

Quick, Bolton. Get the sluice gate on the wire.
Tell him not to open it.

BOLTON.

But, Lannon—

LANNON.

For God's sake, hurry man! Wire first and argue afterwards.

BOLTON.

All right. (*Goes to key.*)

EVA LOU.

Mr. Bolton, don't touch that key.

(*BOLTON hesitates.*)

LANNON.

Go on, man. Never mind her.

EVA LOU.

Mr. Bolton, tell this man the instructions Mr. Browne gave you a few minutes ago.

BOLTON.

I was to take my orders from Miss Lane.

LANNON.

But this is an exceptional case—a matter of life and death, I tell you.

BOLTON.

Not without Miss Lane's permission.

LANNON.

(*Throwing his wallet on the table.*)

There is more money than you will accumulate in a lifetime. It's yours if you send this message. Will you do it?

BOLTON.

Lannon, you know the money doesn't make the slightest difference.

LANNON.

(*Springing at BOLTON and choking him.*)

You send that message, or you'll never live to send another. (*Forces BOLTON toward right.*)

(EVA LOU *rushes to the table and sounds telegraph key*, "S. G.—S. G." Sounder answers, "S. G. O. K.")

EVA LOU.

Mr. Lannon. (LANNON *turns, still holding BOLTON, and sees EVA LOU's hand on the key.*) I have the gates on the wire. Release that man, or I will give the signal. (LANNON *releases BOLTON.*) Bolton, take the key. (BOLTON *sits at the table.*) Now, Mr. Lannon, if you can give me absolute proof that your daughter's life is in danger, I will order Mr. Ansell to keep the gates closed.

LANNON.

(*Terrified.*)

She is in danger. I can give no proof. You must take my word.

EVA LOU.

Why is she in danger?

LANNON.

The dam is weak—rotten. It won't stand under high pressure.

EVA LOU.

Where is it weak? In the construction?

LANNON.

No. In the material.

EVA LOU.

Be more specific.

LANNON.

The cement. There are ten thousand tons of hydraulic cement in the cribs that is worthless.

EVA LOU.

Who is responsible for this state of affairs? (LANNON *hesitates.*) Hurry, please. The water is three minutes overdue, now.

LANNON.

(*Desperately.*)

I am.

STEWART and LANE enter from Company's office at left. AUNT JULE enters from Contractor's office, right. LANNON does not see them.

STEWART.

I thought so. That's enough. (LANNON turns in surprise. EVA LOU goes left.) Bolton, wire Ansell, "Nothing doing."

(BOLTON sends this message: "S G, S G, S G. Keep gate closed till further orders, Browne." Sounder answers, "O K, S G.")

TORRENCE enters from Contractor's office, down left.

TORRENCE.

Father! Father! What is wrong?

LANNON.

(*Amazed, turns to her.*)

Torrence! (Turns and looks at STEWART and EVA LOU.) A frame-up!

(EVA LOU sits at the table, with her hands over her face, crying softly.)

LANNON.

(*After a pause, to TORRENCE.*)

Wait in the office, dear. I have some business to discuss with these gentlemen.

(TORRENCE nods her head and exits into Contractor's office, down right.)

LANNON.

It was very cleverly planned and worked out. The only weak place in my armor. I congratulate you, Mr. Browne; for of course it was your scheme. Miss

Lane is also to be congratulated. She should have been christened Delilah.

STEWART.

Oh, come now, Lannon. It was either you or her father.

LANNON.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not kicking. I was outgeneraled, that's all. Well, what's it to be—jail or compromise?

STEWART.

It's up to you, Lane.

LANE.

I'm very sorry about this, Lannon; very sorry.

LANNON.

I know. But how sorry? Put a cash value on your grief.

LANE.

What do you suggest?

LANNON.

Well (*taking checks from pocket*), here are the checks you gave me yesterday. Suppose I don't present them. That would give you all the material—steel, rock and timber—gratis. A clear profit of two hundred thousand dollars. Would that cover your loss?

LANE.

What do you think, Browne?

STEWART.

I think it would. Now that we know where the trouble is, we can easily remove the present filling and pipe a high grade cement into the cribs.

LANNON.

That's the idea. And I'll pay the piper—on one condition.

LANE.

And that is—?

LANNON.

No one—particularly my daughter—must know of my part in this affair.

STEWART.

That goes for me.

LANE.

Of course. There is nothing to be gained by making it public.

(Telephone bell rings.)

BOLTON.

(Taking up receiver.)

Yes. * * * Yes. * * * *(Turns to LANE.)* The governor wants to know what is the trouble. Says he pushed the button but there is no sign of water.

LANE.

Tell him I will explain the matter personally, in a few minutes.

BOLTON.

(At telephone.)

Mr. Lane will explain the matter in a few minutes.
(Hangs up receiver.)

TORRENCE *enters from Contractor's office, down right.*

TORRENCE.

Well?

LANNON.

Torrence, if you will—

TORRENCE.

I know what you're going to say, dad. And the answer is, No. I'm tired of popping out here and saying "Coo-coo," and then popping back again. If there's any argument, I'm in on it.

LANE.

You are welcome, madam. And let me take this opportunity to apologize for my rudeness yesterday; and to extend my best wishes to you and your good husband, here—

TORRENCE.

(Coolly.)

This is not my husband.

EVA LOU.

(In amazement.)

What's that?

(The others show surprise.)

STEWART.

See? What did I tell you?

LANE.

Not your husband? He is your husband. He's got to be. You said he was. And hang me if—

STEWART.

Wait, people. Let's start fair. If we have to go all over this again, let's choose sides.

LANNON.

Torrence, if you are joking—

TORRENCE.

I am not joking.

LANE.

Then you mean to say that you are not married to Mr. Browne?

TORRENCE.

I am married to Mr. Browne, but—

LANE.

You just this minute said you were not.

TORRENCE.

I did not. I said—

AUNT JULE.

You did. You said, "This is not my husband," just like that.

LANE.

I never heard such flapdoodle in all my life. You put on a husband just like you would a jacket, and you get rid of him just like you would take off an old pair of—

AUNT JULE.

Dave!

LANE.

Gloves! What's the matter with you? (*To AUNT JULE.*)

STEWART.

I guess I'll have to rap on someone for order. Let's settle this thing by arbitration. Bolton, you explain it.

BOLTON.

I will, sir, on condition that I may be allowed to speak without interruption.

LANE.

Go ahead.

BOLTON.

To begin with, there are two persons principally concerned in this affair—Mr. Browne and Mr. Stewart. This is Mr. Stewart.

(*STEWART bows. All express surprise.*)

LANE.

But—

BOLTON.

(*Raising his hand.*)

Please. On April thirteenth Mr. Browne, who was chief of construction, left for Kansas City, where

he was married to this young lady. He never came back. Mr. Stewart carried on the unfinished work, under the name of Browne, and no one but myself knew of the change.

LANNON.

Impossible!

BOLTON.

Not at all. The two men are almost identical in looks, voice and manner. The resemblance is marvellous.

LANE.

Wait a minute. I must speak. Do you mean to say there is another human being in this world who looks, talks and acts like this man?

BOLTON.

Yes.

LANE.

I can't believe it. (*Goes up stage.*) It's too much—too much! (*STEWART stares at him belligerently.*)

AUNT JULE.

It's a remarkable coincidence.

LANNON.

But the work. Were they both engineers?

BOLTON.

Yes.

LANNON.

That is a remarkable coincidence.

EVA LOU.

Where is Mr. Browne now?

BOLTON.

He is in Kansas City, where he has been for the past six weeks, raving; out of his mind.

LANE.

You say the other man is out of his mind, too?

BOLTON.

Yes.

LANE.

By Gad! That *is* a remarkable coincidence.

BOLTON.

He has practically recovered now. He will return here shortly. And that, gentlemen, is the history of this most remarkable affair. (*Exits center door and right.*)

LANNON.

(*To STEWART.*)

You are not, by any chance, J. J. Stewart of Ann Arbor?

STEWART.

Yes.

LANNON.

Then, colonel (*to LANE*), it is only fair to say that this man made the original drawings for the Yuba Valley Dam. Those drawings were stolen from him by—

STEWART.

(*Hastily.*)

We won't go into that.

LANNON.

You're a good sport, Stewart. But Browne is a member of my family and I'm standing behind him. I'll write you a check for the amount of damage—

STEWART.

(*Quickly.*)

No. Absolutely no!

LANNON.

All right. (*Crosses to TORRENCE.*) Just as you say. But my motto is, "Our son-in-law, right or wrong." Eh, Torry?

LANE.

Lannon, let's go. I'm relying on you to salve the governor.

(*LANNON and LANE start for center door.*)

STEWART.

(*Taking LANE's arm, and drawing him down stage.*)

Colonel Lane, I've been a burglar—

LANE.

(*Pulling his arm away.*)

Listen, Browne—or Stewart, or whatever your confounded name is. The battle has raged for six-and-thirty hours. I've fought a good fight, but I'm through. Understand me? Through! If you say you're a burglar, it goes. If you say you're a Rocky Mountain goat, or a two-headed calf, it goes. You can't get an argument out of me. Come on, Lannon.

(*LANE and LANNON exeunt center door and right.*)

AUNT JULE.

May I congratulate you, Mrs. Browne?

TORRENCE.

(*Correcting her.*)

Mrs. Lannon-Browne.

AUNT JULE.

Very sensible of you, my dear. Come. I will give you some advice concerning husbands. I've had three, and feel competent to advise. (*TORRENCE and AUNT JULE exeunt into Contractor's office.*)

EVA LOU.

(*Crossing to STEWART.*)

Cheer up, Tom.

STEWART.

(*Correcting her.*)

Jack.

EVA LOU.

"Jack" is such a pretty name.

STEWART.

How do you like "Stewart"?

EVA LOU.

Well enough to take it for my own.

STEWART.

You see, I've been a burglar. Not a sure-enough burglar. You know, a sort of a—kind of—

EVA LOU.

I know. (*Sits on the table.*)

STEWART.

You know?

EVA LOU.

Yes. You broke into my life and stole my heart. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

STEWART.

(*Putting his arms around EVA LOU's shoulders.*)

Guilty, your honor.

EVA LOU.

Then you are condemned to be confined in the bonds of matrimony for the rest of your natural life. Have you anything to say?

STEWART.

Not a thing. A Daniel has come to judgment.
(*Tries to kiss EVA LOU, but again her hat is in the way.*) Take off your hat in court.

(EVA LOU *is removing her hat at—*)

CURTAIN.

Chinese Love

BY

HUBERT ROPP AND MCKINLEY DIRKSEN

TWO-ACT PLAY for 6 males and 6 females. Time, 1½ hours. Scene: 1 interior.

CHARACTERS.

Wa Humm.....A House Servant
Chung Bau.....An Evil Character
Hum Wan.....Mother of the Bridegroom
Yut See.....A Street Vender
Bow Chang.....Another
Kwong Wan.....The Bridegroom
Ming Woo.....A Woman of the Dusk
Ling Gar.....Father of the Bride
Ling Toy.....Mother of the Bride
Pan Toy.....The Bride
Foy Wong.....A Maid-in-Waiting
Sing Loo.....Lover of Pan Toy

Originally given as a community high school experiment at Pekin, Ill. This play has been in such demand that it is now published, with photographs from the play and detailed instructions for making scenery and costumes. Showing the conflict between old and new world customs in a Chinese community in America, it has its educational side, but it is no less entertaining. Pan Toy's parents have plighted her troth at infancy, but her heart goes out to a Chinese of her own choice. The struggle between love and duty provides a strong plot, and there is plenty of comedy and sentiment as well. A worthy vehicle for ambitious high schools, dramatic clubs and community centers; there is nothing else like it on the market. The original presentation was the subject of a feature article, with illustrations, in "The Theatre Magazine" of New York City.

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The City Feller

BY

LILLIAN MORTIMER

A RURAL COMEDY, in 3 acts; 6 males, 4 females.
Time, 2 hours. Scenes: 1 exterior, 1 interior.

CHARACTERS.

Jim Simpson.....	A Farmer
Marthy Simpson.....	Jim's Wife
Lissie Brown.....	An Orphan
Grandpa Simpson.....	Old but Ambitious
Auntie Purvis.....	Sally's Mother
Lemuel Hecker.....	A Small-Town Slicker
Phil Granger.....	The City Feller
Sally Hecker.....	Lem's Widowed Mother
Jeff Biggs.....	The Town Marshal
Orrin Ruddy.....	The Postmaster

Lissie is a drudge in the Simpson home and life holds little joy for her until Phil, a salesman from the city, happens by and wins her heart. After he has gone Lissie's faith in him is shaken by the malicious comments of Lemuel, who is jealous of the city feller; Lem's mother Sally, who is an inveterate gossip; and Marthy, who thinks well of no one. The unhappy girl further incurs the Simpson wrath by aiding in the courtship of Grandpa Simpson and Auntie Purvis, a sweet, old fashioned couple who are made miserable by their domineering children. The slander-mongers have just about convinced Lissie and all the rest of the village that Phil is a confidence man and a bank robber; and Lissie, driven out by Marthy, is about to wed Lem in desperation, when the city feller gets back to town, takes control of the situation, proves his good character, gives Lem a sound thrashing and claims the hand of his country sweetheart. The romance of the gray-haired couple is one of the most charming things ever staged, and the courtship of sharp-tongued Sally by the deaf old postmaster is a masterpiece of comic conception. This gripping play affords more than the usual amount of laughter, and the interest is continuous. The characters are all so well drawn and the plot so well constructed that an enthusiastic reception is assured.

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Mother Mine

BY

GLADYS RUTH BRIDGHAM

COMEDY of sentiment, in 3 acts; 6 males, 6 females.
Time, 2 hours. Scene: 1 interior.

CHARACTERS.

Cynthia Whitcomb.....The Deacon's Wife
Miranda Peasley....."Mother Mine"
Martha Tisdale.....A Neighbor
Lettie Holcomb.....With a Nose for News
Lillian Whitcomb.....The Deacon's Daughter
Mary Tisdale.....Martha's Daughter
John Whitcomb.....The Deacon
Jack Payson.....The Merchant's Son
Joe Payson.....The Merchant
Jerry MacConnell.....The Newcomer
Officer Lewis.....From Boston
Sam Blunt.....The Constable

The entire action takes place in the living room of Miranda Peasley's cottage in Tapley Village, Maine. When the last of her nieces is married, the dear old lady realizes that for the first time in all her life she is quite alone in the world. Caring for her sister's daughters has never quite satisfied the powerful mother-instinct in her heart, and she prays that in some way she may find a boy to care for. Jerry, a city outcast, breaks into her home to steal, and in this she sees an answer to her prayer. How she awakens the finer side of his nature, trusts him and defends him when all the world seems bent on his ruin, how he repays the steadfast devotion of "Mother Mine," affords an absorbing story, rich in comedy and with many beautiful touches of exalted sentiment. This play has a universal appeal, and the cast is well balanced.

Price, 35 Cents.

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Little Miss Jack

BY

LILLIAN MORTIMER

COMEDY-DRAMA in 4 acts; 6 males, 5 females.
Time, 2 hours. Scenes: 3 interiors.

CHARACTERS.

Maggie A Girl of the Bowery
Jimmie.....With No Taste for "Woik"
Julia Trevors.....Who Has Been a Mother to Jack
Jacqueline.....Little Miss Jack
Doctor Carlyle.....A Successful Physician
Paul Sanborn.....His Assistant
Neena.....The Doctor's Adopted Daughter
Aunt Kathie.....The Doctor's Sister
Rider.....A Social Hanger-On
Draker.....A Justice of the Peace
Jones.....Of the Police

Out of the darkness of poverty and suffering, a strange whim of circumstances brought Jacqueline into her rightful inheritance. But the shadow of grim tragedy lurked always behind the bright curtain of romance. How many girls would have faced their enemies with the courage of Little Miss Jack?

A stirring story of the adventures of a girl, lost to her father, found in the slums, brought back to the luxurious surroundings of her birthright, and imperiled by the attempts of jealous enemies to cause her disappearance. A play with remarkable appeal, especially for audiences demanding strong emotional scenes with plenty of hearty comedy. Lively action throughout, sustained suspense, and numerous big situations. Its popularity on the professional stage is sure to be equaled in the amateur field. There are three interior settings—a plain tenement room, a fashionable living room and an east side hovel. Entirely suitable and practical for amateur production. Price, 35 Cents.

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Fifty-Fifty

BY

FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

A FARCE of love, luck and laughter in 3 acts, by the author of "Mary's Millions"; 5 males, 5 females. Time, 2¼ hours. Scenes: 2 interiors, an attic studio and a bungalow.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

Henry Brown	An Artist
Paul Green	An Author
Patrick O'Malley	A Janitor
Smudge	A Valet
Cap'	A Wanderer
Mrs. Podge.....	A Landlady
Sophie Bland.....	A Dancer
May Dexter.....	An Enthusiast
Mrs. Hawley.....	A Collector
Josephine	A Seeker

If there be a moral to this merry comedy of complications, it is that it is possible to get too much of a good thing. Paul and Henry are struggling to achieve fame and bread-and-butter money in literature and art. Utter failure is their lot until one of Henry's paintings, accidentally displayed upside down, is enthusiastically purchased by an art collector, and the "impressionistic painter" becomes the talk of the town. Paul, following the hunch, writes his stories backward, and success follows swiftly. But some innocent fibs, told for reasons of necessity, reach the newspapers, and the pals find themselves headed straight for trouble. Their love affairs go awry, and in the predicaments which follow as a result of their propensity for spinning yarns, they find success an empty thing. A woman who claims to be Paul's wife, an elusive vanishing painting, a mysterious sea-faring man, a meddling landlady, all contribute to the mixup. Of course it all comes out happily.

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By Gladys Ruth Bridgham. Comedy in prologue and 2 acts; 7 males, 3 females. Time, 2 hours. Price, 35 Cents.

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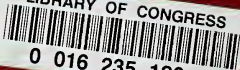
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